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ABSTRACT

This report on parent involvement in compensatory education makes recommendations for future involvement based on intervention studies and program experience with parents. Various types of parental roles are discussed (tutors, paid employees, advisors and decision makers). Research evidence on the effectiveness of parent involvement in increasing children's subsequent achievement is summarized, and suggestions are made for further research. The second section of this report deals with policy implications of parent involvement. New roles for parents are suggested, with reference to accountability and evaluation. (CS)

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PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN COMPENSATORY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Research Memorandum
EPRC 2158-20

Prepared for:

OFFICE OF PLANNING, BUDGETING AND EVALUATION
U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION
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Menlo Park, California 94025

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SUMMARY

Part 1: Definitions and Findings

In theory and in practice, parent involvement in compensatory education programs is not a simple, unitary concept. Parents have been encouraged to participate in many different capacities, which can be classified into three main types of activities: parents as tutors of their own children, parents as employees of the school, and parents as decision makers or advisors to school personnel.

Within these three there is substantial variation. Parents as tutors receive training through group meetings or home visits from the staff to become educators of their own children. A classroom aide may perform only routine chores (taking attendance, etc.), or she may have instructional duties. The variety of possible decision-making activities is especially large, varying with both the areas in which decisions are made (personnel, budget, curriculum, etc.) and the levels of responsibility (largely advisory, authority to approve or veto policy, authority to make policy).

There are several bases for assuming that parent involvement will benefit the children. Several hypotheses exist which attempt to explain the generally poor academic performance of children from low-income and/or minority culture families, including the Environmental Deficit Model, the School as Failure Model, the Cultural Differences Model, and the Social Structural Change Model.

The Environmental Deficit Model assumes that inadequacies in the child's home and in his interactions with others fail to promote his optimal intellectual and social development; programs based on this model

provide training for parents to encourage development of a more stimulating home environment.

In the School as Failure Model, the school itself is identified as the source of the problem. The school, it is argued, does not recognize the special needs of disadvantaged or minority children and therefore does not provide adequate opportunities for success. The Cultural Differences Model similarly locates the problem in the school; programs originating under this model charge the school specifically with failing to recognize minority cultures as different from, but not inferior to, mainstream society. In both models, parents often participate as classroom aides to maximize the possibility of children receiving individualized attention, or as advisors who have special knowledge of their children's particular needs. The Cultural Difference Model, especially, asserts that parents are uniquely qualified both to transmit their cultural heritage to the children in the classroom, and to advise professional staff on materials and practices acceptable to the community.

Advocates of the Social Structural Change Model assume that the power structure which controls all of society's institutions must be changed to enfranchise the low-income and minority communities. They assume that improved academic performance is impossible or insignificant without equalization of opportunities through a shift of decision-making power directly to the people served by instiuttions. Programs in this model tend to emphasize formalized involvement of parents in decision-making roles. The connections between these models and participatory roles for parents are not direct; nevertheless, the assumptions held by policy makers obviously affect the programs (and, in particular, the types of parent involvement) they develop or encourage.

In general, the large compensatory programs funded by the USOE, such as ESEA Title I and Follow Through, permit parents to participate as tutors,

or paid employees, or decision makers--or a combination of all three--and program offices especially encourage involvement in advisory and decision-making activities. But the variation across (and within) programs in the level of responsibility considered appropriate for parents, and the variations in the mechanisms established for participation, suggest fundamental differences in the philosophies under which different programs operate. Unfortunately, evaluations of these programs have provided little or no evidence that describes the impacts of these varying policies on the degree of parent participation elicited or on the effects of participation.

Evidence of the success or failure of parent involvement in bringing about improved school performance in children is extremely limited. For parents as employees and parents as decision makers, no direct evidence was found to confirm or reject the basic hypotheses about impacts on children, although there is evidence of benefits to participating adults. Some favorable findings exist for parents as tutors of children of preschool age, if the involvement is intensive and specific participation can be obtained and sustained; studies of impacts on older children are rare and inconclusive.

In considering the lack of conclusive evidence, it should be remembered that the compensatory education movement overall has generally failed to demonstrate impressive achievement gains for children. The participation of parents is typically only one of many innovations introduced at the same time. For this reason, even those evaluations which have detected impacts on child achievement have not generally been able to attribute effects to specific causes (e.g., to parent involvement or to special training for teachers).

For each of the three major parent activities, chains of events can be hypothesized to describe the ways in which parent participation has been predicted to result in impacts on children.

These hypothetical chains of events broaden the base of relevant studies and enable detection of effects that precede (and, in theory, promote or predict) achievement gains in the target children. There is evidence that involving parents in decision-making or as employees can have positive effects on their self-esteem and can lead to changes in institutions or in classroom procedures. This evidence suggests that some programs may be moving in the direction of improved performance by the children. The expanded hypotheses also lead to identification and categorization of sources for program failure--lack of participation, problems in implementation, and conflicting expectations.

Possibly the major reason for lack of conclusive findings from research to date is the lack of fully developed conceptual models for the hypotheses being tested in evaluations of parent involvement, particularly in decision making. Better measures of the roles which parents actually play, both in terms of their level of authority and the areas in which they exercise this authority, need to be developed so that connections between types of involvement and impacts of involvement--on parents, programs, community institutions, and children--can be investigated. Programs already in existence provide a rich source of material for such studies. Because it seems likely that in many cases, the effect of parent involvement on child achievement will be long delayed and that the specific causes of positive effects will remain difficult to identify--particularly in comprehensive intervention programs--evaluative research should focus not only on impacts but on the nature of involvement itself and on the determinants of involvement.

Part 2: Policy Implications

There is much debate over the supposed capacity of parental involvement to engender either wholesale school reform or what is termed

"community development"--raising the consciousness and improving the personal and political skills of the poor. While these appear to be two separate issues, they become so entangled during debate that it is difficult to draw a practical distinction.

To the best of our knowledge there is no solid documentation to demonstrate that parental fnvolvement in the schools raises community consciousness, or that it leads to the kind of sweeping school reform which is so lovingly described. Moreover, neither side of the debate is able to take a position which is internally consistent, and the result has been that regardless of which group holds political sway at any particular time, there is considerable vacillation in policy and great disagreement over the interpretation of the effects of the steps taken.

It appears that a fresh perspective is needed on whether the involvement of parents in parent councils can produce specific short run benefits to programs concerned with education of the disadvantaged.

Instead of expecting parents to single-handedly reform the entire public shcool system, we might ask instead a different question: are there specific problems in the operation of compensatory programs or their immediate school context, which active and independent parent groups can alleviate? The current conditions of education for the disadvantaged display at least two pressing problems which might be amenable to this approach. First, the present system of evaluation and auditing in general, and of Federal programs in specific, is seriously ineffective. Both Federal and state governments have tried to force the schools to be more effective for a given amount of money, and pressure continues toward finding new instruments and accounting procedures which will make accountability a workable concept. However, existing accountability instruments such as PPBS are very expensive, have yet to show any tangible pay-off, and are increasingly under political attack. A special case is the evaluation of specific

Federal programs for the disadvantaged. Evaluation done by the same professional who devised the program presents the familiar dilemma of the judge who tries his own case: the programs are commonly "doomed to success."

The second pressing problem is that in densely populated and extensive urban areas, the elected school boards are increasingly unable to perform their functions adequately. Ultimately it is their job to see that the educational needs of real students are met, but school boards are classically understaffed, and the time they can give to the innumerable problems of the district is severly limited. As a result, it is difficult if not impossible for them to gather enough information to keep track of what is actually going on in individual schools, either financially or educationally. The problem is intensified by the diversity of project design within districts. This diversity appears to be a given, since it occurs both in programs which distinctly encourage local design (e.g., Title I) and those which support the application of discrete models (e.g., Follow Through.) If it is to fulfill its educational responsibilities to real students, an urban school board must develop an information network which is far more sensitive to the local schools.

These are problems with which parents can begin to cope, if they have the interest and the opportunity to do so. If properly developed, parent groups could represent the interest both of the school board and the federal program in a much more finely tuned way than any other group is at present doing. They are close enough to know and monitor the operation of the school or the compensatory project, and their perspective is not altered by a stake in professional advancement or by administrative constraint. Many of the difficulties of evaluation are reduced--and accountability through the school board is increased--if the evaluation is more clearly vested in the parents and exercised at the level of the individual school.

Well defined use of parent groups might achieve many of the most important goals of accountability--e.g., increased learning, greater legitimacy--while reducing the need for more complicated state-wide and national machinery. Despite a wealth of confusing data and "expert" opinions, the issues in most evaluations are reasonably clear even--or perhaps particularly--to stakeholders other than professional educators. Individual parent groups have carried out complicated and perceptive analyses, and produced persuasive and pointed reports on the operation of "their" programs. In addition, problems once discovered by parent groups have a built-in constituency for solution, something which neither SEA's nor USOE can provide.

There is the question of whether such tasks will bring parents into increasingly threatening relationships to teachers and administrators. The answer seems likely to be "no," since the tasks proposed here for parents need not result in disruption, and may in fact deter it. Fruitless confrontation and disruption occur most frequently when parents focus their efforts on the hiring and firing of individual teachers. Professionals feel that these are matters which should be dealt with through self-regulatory mechanisms. By assigning parents tasks of evaluation, professionals are allowed to exert their individual best judgment within the classroom, which is then subjected to the parents' legitimate question of whether the chosen methods and teachers were effective in reaching stated goals. This differentiation allows both parents and professionals to perform functions which, while over-lapping, are not confused. Each has a sphere of legitimate and parallel responsibility.

The first problem that USOE faces in developing guidelines for any collective activity by parents is overcoming the traditional lack of participation; the second is to structure participation so that it is constructive rather than disruptive. Both low participation and disruption

share at least one common cause, namely, poorly specified guidelines for parental involvement. Guidelines which are nebulous, which appear to give parents something to do without making it clear what that is and how it relates to the normal function of the school, provide little incentive to low income parents to overcome the economic and social obstacles to their participation. Moreover, when parents do participate, the same ambiguity in the guidelines tends to accentuate some of the normal conflicts between the functions of parents, administrators, and teachers until a level of disruption is reached. Unfortunately, the movement from conflict to disruption is further accentuated by USOE's traditional assumption in formal guidelines and regulations that actual conflict, or the potential for it, does not exist.

The recommendations made here are not definitive, but should help to indicate both the scope and the specificity of regulations which will be needed for constructive activity by parent groups. They are oriented toward a general support program such as ESEA or the Better Schools Act, rather than toward more specific demonstration or experimental programs such as bilingual education or Follow Through, since the latter type of programs will need to develop guidelines consistent with their own ends.

Our recommendations for policy on effective parent councils are divided into four general recommendations regarding:

(1) The need for specific tasks as well as advisory functions.

(2) The relationship of parental and professional activities.

(3) Recognition of conflict as a fact of school life, especially in urban settings.

(4) Provision of recourse to settle conflicts.

In addition, ten specific recommendations on parent councils deal with:

Structure

(5) Organization at the individual school level.

(6) Elective rather than appointive positions.

(7) Continuity of membership.

Function

(8) Council the preparation of an annual Report of Progress.

(9) The uses of such a report.

(10) Needs assessment and goal setting activities.

(11) Council role in personnel selection.

Resources

(12) Information on regulations, funding, and student achievement.

(13) Directing of council expenses.

(14) Information bank of exemplary parent groups.

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I INTRODUCTION

During the last decade, Americans had great expectations (perhaps too great) that the schools would be a primary instrument in solving several of our largest social problems. We wanted them to bring about equality of opportunity, reduce racial conflict, and allow the "disadvantaged" to assume constructive participation in the economy. Compensatory education was heralded as a way of raising school achievement levels of children from low-income (and usually minority-group) families, allowing them to break out of the poverty cycle through education. Parental participation has been regarded by many as an essential component of compensatory education activities, promising to yield significant intellectual and social benefits for parent and child alike. Such participation was mandated in many pieces of education legislation, and required in Federal program guidelines. However, the general expectations were based on a potpourri of logics which were never fully clarified in theory and practice.

Parents were brought into programs for education of preschool children during the 1960s when psychologists and sociologists (e.g., Bloom, 1964; Hess, 1969; Hunt, 1961)* began to analyze the specificity of the effects of parents' child-rearing or "teaching" styles on their children, especially during the children's earliest years.

The war on poverty, institutionalized by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, also heavily emphasized parents as change agents. OEO programs were based on theories that there was an inter-generational

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*The references are listed at the end of this report.

"culture of poverty" and that the "cycle of poverty" was perpetuated by children modeling themselves after their poor, powerless, and alienated parents. It was believed that changes in the status of the poor could not be brought about solely through direct school services to individuals but would occur only if the poor were also empowered to help themselves -- expressed in the legislation as "maximum feasible participation."

A third impetus for parental involvement in compensatory education came when (1) the Equal Education Opportunity Survey (Coleman et al., 1966) reported that home environment explained much of the variance in achievement and that high achievement in school was associated with higher parent involvement, and when (2) positive effects of compensatory programs for disadvantaged preschoolers did not persist into the primary grades and it seemed that poor children might require continued compensation in the home.

Part 1 of this report briefly reviews the ways in which parent participation has evolved from these beginnings, the forms it now takes in compensatory education programs, the assumptions upon which such participation is based, and the evidence available concerning the effects of participation, especially on children. This part of the report is designed essentially to acquaint the reader with the state of knowledge supporting or refuting the hypothesis that parental involvement in education leads to improvement in children's achievement at school, and to suggest directions for further study.

Other justifications for parent involvement have been advanced. It has been suggested that involvement produces financial and psychological benefits for the parents themselves. There is also support for parent involvement as a way to make the schools accountable to the parents, and to legitimize educational institutions by involving "consumers" in their governance. Such impacts may themselves be sufficiently important to warrant continued support for encouraging parents to become active

participants in the schools. Part 2 of this report does not consider the reasons for parent involvement but rather focuses on Federal policy as it affects involvement, particularly in parent councils with decision-making capabilities.

II PARENTAL ROLES AND UNDERLYING MODELS IN COMPENSATORY EDUCTION PROGRAMS

Parental Roles

"Parent involvement" is anything but a simple, unitary concept. In theory and in practice it can take many forms--parents as recipients of home management training, parents as child-rearing trainees and tutors for their own children, parents as paid paraprofessionals in the schools, and parents as advisors and decision makers at the local school level. The pages that follow provide a brief overview and divide the range of parental roles into three very general categories: parents as (1) tutors, (2) paid employees, and (3) advisors or decision makers.

Parents as Tutors of Their Own Children

In this kind of participation parents, generally mothers, are given skills to aid the development of their own children. For example, they may attend discussion sessions with a child development specialist in which they discuss child-rearing practices that will teach their young children skills and/or attitudes which will help them in school. In another form of this role, low income mothers are visited in their own homes by professionals or by community liaison workers who instruct them in various aspects of tutoring and child care. Some parent education programs have specific skills to recommend, e.g., mothers learn to employ special toys or to use materials found around the house in new ways. Others concentrate on general principles of learning and discipline, e.g., the importance of conversation, environmental stimulation, and positive reinforcement. Many of the skills these parents are taught are based on the behaviors that have been found to distinguish middle-class mothers from lower-class mothers.

Parents as Paid Employees

The most widespread employment of parents in elementary education has been in the classroom, where they work under the supervision of teachers. The classroom aide (sometimes called "assistant" or "paraprofessional") may perform any of a wide range of duties, depending on the goals of the particular project and on the attitude of the individual teacher. At one end of the spectrum an aide may be restricted to non-instructional tasks, e.g., taking the roll, thus freeing the teacher from these time-consuming chores. At a somewhat higher level, the aide may work with individual children or with small groups, reviewing concepts they have already learned in reading, spelling, or arithmetic. In rare instances, aides with considerable experience or training may be given the responsibility of teaching new skills and concepts, sometimes in conjunction with and sometimes in the absence of the teacher.

Parents have also been employed outside the classroom as community workers or school/home coordinators. A parent in this role generally functions as a liaison between the program or school professional staff and those parents who are reluctant or unable to interact with the professional staff directly. They generally work to make parents more active, encouraging them to visit their children's classrooms, attend meetings, or just get together socially. Sometimes these paid parents are expected to facilitate communication in both directions, providing information and assistance to parents and in turn providing feedback from them to the professional staff.

Parents as Advisors and Decision Makers

Programs attempting to promote parent involvement in educational decision-making as a strategy for improving the performance of disadvantaged children are relatively new. They vary widely in objectives, from

seeking to make schools generally "responsive" to parents while not necessarily relinquishing power to them (for example, programs that inform parents of decisions after making them), through those programs, like Follow Through, which have parent advisory committees, to school programs that are actually controlled by parents and the community.* A somewhat different focus might be on the effects of alternative schools in which parents exercise control through their choice of a school for their children. This latter focus will not be discussed in this paper, which is devoted to parent involvement in Federally sponsored compensatory education programs.

With regard to decision-making roles and real influence, or what Fantini (1970) calls "functional control," there are many typologies available, but there is only anecdotal evidence regarding what kinds of decision-making roles are extant, and for what reasons, in existing federal programs. A typology from a Recruitment Leadership and Training Institute publication (RLTI, 1972) includes five roles. Other systems have been developed but these categories make distinctions which are helpful in characterizing OE sponsored programs. According to the RLTI publication:

> (1) The Placation [Role]--school officials and school boards allow community persons and parents to... make whatever minimum decisions [are] necessary to keep the noise level down. The "noise" may be generated from various sources--the Federal government, state level agencies, [or] some local board members...The Placation [Role] has been the major

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*We have not been careful to differentiate here between parents having an influence on the decisions about the special compensatory program, and parents having an influence on decisions about the regular programs of the school or school district as a whole. The relationships between these decision-making roles are complex and need further study.

response of school systems nationwide to Federal mandates for community participation in various Federally financed education programs...This is particularly well documented in the case of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act... reports of Title I; special issue, "Title I and Parent Participation in Education" in Equality in Education, Nov. 13, 1971 (pp. 11-12)

(2) The Sanctions [Role]--The major purpose is to find persons, preferably highly visible to the widest community, who will give sanction to already established or newly developed school goals. The choice of citizens who...participate is left solely to...school officials or board members. The participants are selected to serve various predetermined ends, in general to spread the word of approval concerning goals which remain largely shaped by school officials themselves. (pp. 29-30)

(3) The Information [Role]--The major purpose is to bring together a group of persons who have information which school officials have decided they need or which they have been directed to obtain by, e.g., the Federal government or their own board. The Informational [Role] appears in both simple and more complex forms. In the simplest form, school officials maintain control over the choice of persons who will participate...When programs are involved, the school officials must locate and bring together persons whom the programs are designed to serve. It is assumed that the participants have information (which the school officials lack in some measure) about what needs those programs should be designed to meet, services those programs should offer, and what features should be avoided. (pp.24,32)

(4) Checks and Balances [Role]--The major purpose of this [role] is to provide citizens or some segment of them with some inquiry, veto and "checkmate" powers, which they may use to prevent being

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*The concept of a "placation" role was originally developed by Sherry Arnstein, former Chief Advisor on Citizen Participation in HUD's Model Cities Administration, although her typology differed somewhat from the role as described here (Arnstein, 1969).

hornswoggled or ridden rough-shod over. The model necessitates a two-way exchange of information between citizens and school officials, and citizens must approve or disapprove certain decisions regarding programs they have been gathered together to protect and foster in their own interest. (p. 29)

(5) The Change-Agent [Role]--This [role], when functional, is vastly more complex than any of the other [four], and is capable of appearing in limitless substantive forms. Its major purpose is to set in motion a series of events that will assure that the group, as individuals and as a collective, and the substance with which they are dealing, will change over a period of time. The changes must be goal-oriented in terms developed by the participants. Community organization is an essential ingredient of this model, and it must also subsume most of the elements of the Information [Role]. In this model citizens have what might be called "negative power" (to prevent things) but they also have "forward motion power" through the new roles they develop. The latter is the chief source of functional control in this [role]. (pp. 29-30)

Models for Parent Participation

There are many reasons for inviting parents to participate in their children's compensatory education or to involve themselves with the schools. Below we examine some of the assumptions underlying compensatory education programs that affect the types of parental roles these programs encourage, the degree of participation they elicit, and the outcomes of that participation. The assumptions about the problems of the "achievement gap" and the connection between socioeconomic disadvantage and poor academic performance will be discussed according to four models which implicitly or explicitly guide most programs of education for the disadvantaged child. These models were abstracted by Robert Hess (1969) from fairly elaborate and well-developed social scientific theories about

cultural, economic and developmental disadvantage. Similar sets of models have been noted by Ira Gordon, among others (Gordon, 1969[a]).

The Environmental Deficit Model

Many programs start from the assumption that low SES children suffer from the "handicap" of an inadequate environment. Their low-income, often minority-culture environment, as mediated by their families, has not promoted optimal intellectual and social development. The locus of the problem is seen to be the neighborhood and immediate family environment and interaction patterns. Programs created on the basis of the Deficit Model primarily focus on improving that environment and/or changing parental behavior to help children overcome their deficits. Direct parental involvement to learn home management skills and tutoring skills for their children is thus a frequent component of programs based on this model.

The School-as-Failure Model

Another approach assumes that the academic performance differential between lower and middle class children arises from the failings of the school system--especially its frequent inflexibility and its lack of appreciation of minority cultural values. The locus of the problem is seen to be the school, not the home, and it is further assumed that if the school can be changed to meet the needs of disadvantaged children, their level of academic achievement will rise accordingly.

Parental participation, following this model, can be of several types. Typically, parents are viewed as resources with special knowledge concerning the needs of their children, and/or with special skills for communicating with their children. Their involvement in the school is seen as a way to help educators plan programs to reach children more

effectively. Parents' special knowledge is typically utilized through their services as school-home paraprofessional staff or through their participation in the local school decision-making processes.

The Social Structural Change Model

Programs based on this model assume that drastic, concurrent changes are needed in the power relationships in all social institutions (health, education, business) in order to equalize the entire opportunity structure and to overcome the conditions that impair academic performance and self-concepts among low SES children. Institutions supposed to serve the poor are regarded as increasingly inflexible and unresponsive to the needs of the community. The people currently in power are presumed to be unwilling or unable to make the radical changes required, and some real shift of power to the people served by the institutions is necessary as a first step toward resolving the problems.

Compensatory education programs based on this model tend to view parents as potential agents of social change. Their primary participatory role is thus seen as makers of policy decisions on the school, school district, city, or even state level. It is among programs based on this model that one may sometimes discern the perceived need to re-legitimize the school, making it a valid institution for the people it serves. The presumed effect on children's academic performance then often takes second place to changing the institutions themselves.

The Cultural Differences Model

Programs originating from this model do not assume any deficiencies on the part of communities with an ethnic difference or a first language other than standard English. They assume, rather, that members of culturally different groups are merely different from mainstream society--

that they have different customs, values, and ways of doing things that are not taken into account by traditional public school methods or goals. The model further assumes that these differences should be permitted to persist, or even be cherished, as the most feasible way of allowing all individuals to realize their full potential and all groups to attain their appropriate status as respected segments of a culturally mixed population.

In this model, parents may participate in several roles. Since they share the native language and culture of the community, they may be employed as paraprofessionals either in the classroom or in the community. As in the School-as-Failure model, they are recognized as possessing special knowledge about the needs of their children; in addition, they are better qualified than school or program professionals to impart to their children pride in their cultural heritage.

III FEDERAL PROGRAMS REQUIRING PARENT PARTICIPATION

During the 1960s, Congress authorized an array of categorical programs in compensatory education and educational research, as well as several poverty programs dealing with child development. Legislation for many of these programs calls for some form of parent involvement. Little would be gained here from a detailed analysis of each of these programs; however, a closer look at four programs now administered by the U.S. Office of Education--Right to Read, ESEA Title I, Follow Through, and the Bilingual/Bicultural Program--should illustrate how the models and assumptions discussed in the previous section have been translated into Federal guidelines for parent involvement, and how differences in regulations and in the actions of Federal program staff can affect actual parental participation roles in programs administered by this one agency.

Right to Read

Parents serve a wide variety of functions within the Right to Read program. OE project staff report that parents are often tutors, paid teacher aides, or parent/school coordinators. These roles, however, are not required by the guidelines. The only thing emphasized in the relevant regulations is parent involvement in decision making on local projects.

The importance placed on parent participation is expressed in the funding procedures, since one of the bases on which local projects are funded is the expressed willingness of the school officials to change their customary modus operandi. The principal of a school-based project must involve some parents in an 11-step planning process specified by OE. Parental help is required in assessing needs and influencing program

design and selection, and the parents of participating children are considered valuable advisors. However, real authority and responsibility for the conduct of local projects remains with the professional staff, and the nature of parent involvement in decision-making thus remains ambiguous. Right to Read program staff have no documentation of the roles parents may be playing in the recommended planning process; staff concern with program elements other than parent involvement seems primary.

It is presumed that parent participation will insure community understanding and support of the project. While it is likely that most of the active parents will be the same ones that are involved in the PTA or Home and School Association, the guidelines are at least intended to foster mutuality of influence and to insure that the project is the most appropriate for the children involved. There is evidence in the literature (Fantini, 1970) to reinforce the OE position that if parents participate in planning the program, they--at least those directly involved--will share responsibility for its success. In this respect the program staff seem to feel that involved parents will naturally tend to act in a sanctions role, by telling others about their program and thereby encouraging a broad base of community support.

Right to Read program guidelines and staff generally assume the School-as-Failure model; the school system has somehow operated in a way which leaves many children (and adults) functionally illiterate, and it is presumed that parents have the ability and the right to assist in modifying their children's education so that it works for them. The guidelines assume that school professionals are basically well intentioned and willing to modify their programs--and that problems can be overcome with energy, curricular innovation, and specialized personnel--without massive reform.

ESEA Title 1

Although the Title I guidelines permit and encourage all kinds of parent involvement, little attention is given to effecting specific improvements in the direct interaction between parent and child. Rather, as in Right to Read, the focus is on increasing the effectiveness with which parents can influence decisions made by local school officials. Title I regulations have provided a formal means for decision-making participation by parents, provisions which Right to Read apparently lacks.

Examination of Title I's history shows that the commitment to and mechanisms for parent participation have emerged slowly and have undergone frequent changes since ESEA was authorized in 1965. Federal officials began urging Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to involve parents and other interested community members soon after enactment of the original legislation, but there were no formal requirements for parent involvement. A document issued in 1968 (Program Guide no. 46) recommended establishment of local advisory councils. Public Law 91-230, passed in 1970, empowered the U.S. Commissioner of Education to require LEAs to involve parents in Federally financed programs if such involvement appeared beneficial. A year later, in October 1971, Title I guidelines were amended to require establishment of parent councils for local projects. These councils, on which parents were to constitute more than a simple majority, were to participate in the planning, development, operation, and evaluation of the projects.

Subsequent Title I publications have emphasized that these councils should be "a structured, organized means of involving parents" in Title I projects (Parental Involvement in Title I ESEA, 1972, p. 5). Organizing parents into formally structured and officially sanctioned groups increases the likelihood that they will not be co-opted into the placation role or the sanctions role. Emphasis by program staff on the need to

provide training for parent council members and other parents indicates that OE personnel envision the information role as the ideal one for the parent councils. However, the guidelines do not specify the kinds of decisions in which the councils are to be involved or the ways in which they can actually influence decisions.

As a result, the expectations held by parents and local staff members vary from school to school and district to district. At present, many Title I councils want to act in a checks and balances role (similar to their perception of Follow Through Parent Advisory Committees. Many OE administrators generally support a stronger role for parents. The parents' impact on decisions would, they feel, be strengthened if funds were available to train parent groups in the complexities of Title I legislation and regulations, and if more parent members of the councils were elected from Among Title I parents rather than appointed by school boards. However, there is currently no formal provision for such activities, and local councils are often left to determine their own roles, depending on the amount of cooperation they receive from local school and project officials.

Like Right to Read, Title I generally assumes a School-as-Failure model. Program guidelines imply that the major responsibility for poor achievement of children and for effecting a cure rests with professional educators and, further, that cooperation between parents and professionals can be accomplished fairly easily, with parents serving as advisors and professional staff acting upon their advice. It is unfortunate that conflicting expectations have sometimes had the effect of polarizing district professionals and Title I parents. Educators then tend to assume an Environmental Deficit model while the parents assume a Social Structural Change model, with the result that little cooperation is possible.

Follow Through

In Follow Through, parent involvement takes at least as great a variety of forms as in Title I, depending partly upon the particular sponsor or curricular model that is chosen for a school. However, regardless of the model chosen, Follow Through guidelines call for parent involvement in all the roles described earlier, focusing on the PACs (Parent Advisory Committees). What sets Follow Through apart from Title I in this respect is not so much the ways in which parents have been encouraged to participate as the rationale behind this participation.

Authorized under the community action title of the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act, Follow Through was originally conceived as a comprehensive attack on poverty in which the school would serve as a focal point for coordination of services to the low-income community. "Maximum feasible participation" was to be encouraged as a way not only to optimize immediate impacts on the children but also to permit adults in the poverty community to change the social context in which the children were educated. Follow Through (as well as Head Start and other EOA-authorized activities) stems from a Social Structural Change model, and is oriented toward changing local institutions and the power and status of the parents and thus their children.

A fundamental tenet of Follow Through, expressed in its Program Guidelines (1969) is that "parents have both the right and the responsibility to share in determining the nature of their children's education" (p.5). PACs are expected to participate in preparing annual project applications and to help select staff and materials. The project staff bears the major responsibility for the conduct of the local project, but the guidelines require that the PACs approve local staff decisions and approve proposals for additional funding. In sum, the Follow Through guidelines and the tenor of OE administrative actions place PACs in the role of checks and balances, or of change agents.

Shortly after its inception, the Follow Through program underwent a major shift to become an experimental program administered by OE. While this relocation signalled heavier emphasis in evaluation on academic achievement and educational services provided by the school, there is no evidence that program personnel gave less attention to the delivery of comprehensive services or to impacts on parents, community, or institutions. EOA remains the authorizing legislation, and the program staff at OE continues to support the program's original intent of involving parents in significant roles. However, the shift of administrative agency probably tended to limit somewhat the scope of the change agent role to school-bound change while increasing the emphasis on parent involvement as a means of maximizing program impacts on the children rather than as an end--a recognition of parental rights to participate in decisions affecting their children.

The Bilingual/Bicultural Program

Regulations for the Bilingual Education Program under Title VII of ESEA require that in planning the project, the local education agency must determine the needs of the children to be served "after consultation with persons in families of limited English-speaking ability or with others knowledgeable of the needs of such children" and must "make optimum use of the cultural and educational resources of the area to be served" ("Grants for Bilingual Education Programs--Regulations," p.4). According to these OE regulations, the criteria for proposal evaluation include the "degree of participation in the planning of the project by persons in families of limited English-speaking ability with low incomes" (p. 5).

The Manual for Project Applicants and Grantees (April 20, 1971) goes further in stating that the programs must include parents and community in all aspects of the project, including planning, implementation, and evaluation:

> Needs cannot be adequately assessed without consultation with the parents and community representatives, the people who have "been there" and who live with first-hand knowledge of their children's problems in an English-speaking environment. Nor can long-range goals be postulated without the knowledge of parents' aspirations for their children. Without the active support of the parents and the community, goals will be inadequately achieved and plans will contain hidden pitfalls. (pp. 67-68).

While the regulations rather mildly encourage parental involvement in many roles, the OE staff--like Title I and Follow Through project officers--put much more emphasis on citizen participation in decision-making than on participation in other roles, and they act as advocates for the parent/community groups. Many or most non-mainstream cultural groups probably operate in placation or sanctions roles, but checks and balances or change-agent roles are envisioned for them at OE. Project staff not only believe training to be valuable but press for parent representatives to be present during LEA-OE negotiations for Bilingual Grant funding.

Obviously the Cultural Differences model guides and influences the administration of the regulations in this program. A seemingly naive pluralist ideal is held and has the potential of causing difficult problems, since different cultures may hold ideals and advocate behaviors that prove to be incompatible rather than merely different. A case in point is the unwillingness of a particular Indian tribe to commit its language in full to written symbols for fear that doing so would put the language (the tribe's last vestige of cultural individuality and a tribal treasure) into the hands of untrustworthy whites. In such cases, it is obviously impossible to develop a bilingual curriculum.

IV PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND CHILD ACHIEVEMENT: THE STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

A major justification for parent involvement (in whatever role) in compensatory education programs is the assumption that it will improve their children's school performance. Although there is considerable evidence that it can work (see Section V), the direct evidence to date that it does work is scanty or nonexistent for most types of participation. However, we are all familiar with the paucity of statistically significant differences found between children who have participated in compensatory programs and similar children who have not participated, regardless of whether parents were involved in the programs. Title I program evaluations have been especially consistent in finding little difference between participant and non-participant children. Gross overall Head Start and Follow Through evaluations have also revealed only marginal results favoring participant children. The findings of studies on parental involvement should be interpreted in light of this general context of evaluative results and the current state of the art in evaluation.

This section discusses what information is available from studies focused specifically on child effects directly resulting from parent participation in their education--that is, "input-output" type studies where the effects of involving parents in a program are evaluated in terms of a child performance output measure.

Parents as Tutors

Preschool Children

The wide variety of programs in which parents participate as tutors of their own children is demonstrated in the review literature (e.g., Gordon, 1969b; Lazar and Chapman, 1972).* The parent program may or may not be accompanied by a preschool program for the child. A program staff member may visit homes to work with each family individually (often with both mother and child, although sometimes with just the mother). This staff member may bring special materials which she trains the mother to use, or she may work with materials already in the home. In some programs, training is accomplished through parent discussion groups. Some programs use both approaches.

The evidence indicates that involving parents as trainees and tutors can indeed improve children's performance--at least with young, preschool children. Several carefully controlled intervention studies can be cited (Gilmer, 1969; McCarthy, 1968; Levenstein, 1969; Karnes, et al., 1969) in which the degree of involvement of the parent as learner and tutor was systematically manipulated. The investigators noted positive effects of such participation both on parents' attitudes about themselves and on children's IQ scores. These studies have shown that young children can be affected by changes in parent's behavior, although it is not clear precisely how these effects come about. Good effects are more likely to result when training and involvement are quite intensive and when the parents' needs as well as those of the children are met.

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*Both these reviews describe programs and the training given to parents and present the results for the programs--both standardized achievement tests given to experimental and control children and, in some cases, program-specific measures.

School-Aged Children

Very few attempts at using parents as tutors for older children are reported, and findings are inconsistent. This may be due in part to the general paucity of research and theory on learning patterns of the older child; it is not clear what skills parents of older children should acquire and what changes in attitudes and actions toward older children are needed in poor parents who wish to promote their children's school achievement.

Several studies have focused on school-related performance of children in primary grades. The School and Home Program of Flint, Michigan, in the early 1960s was very successful in involving parents directly in reading to, listening to, and making study space and time available to their own children, with good results for elementary school achievement (Hawkridge, et al., 1968).

Results from Follow Through projects implementing the University of Florida's home-based intervention model as a strategy for promoting child growth and achievement in the primary grades (an approach with demonstrated success for preschool children) are mixed. Some groups showed consistently significant achievement advantages over comparison groups enrolled in regular elementary school programs without parent involvement, while other groups have not shown such advantage (Emrick, et al., 1973).*

There are other examples of programs utilizing home visits and training for parents with children in the primary grades which have reported gains in child achievement. The SKIP program (Radin, 1969) involving biweekly visits to the homes of kindergarten youngsters was quite successful.

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*Since there were certain data collection problems for most of the groups showing no advantage in achievement in this study, the investigators actually have considerable confidence in the validity of the positive findings (pp. 215-216).

One conclusion reported in nearly every study of parent education programs or programs with parents acting as tutors is that a significant degree of participation is extremely difficult to obtain. This is doubtless due in part to the many physical and financial demands on poor parents which force them to focus on sheer survival and give active participation in their children's schooling lower priority. It may also be due--in greater part in the 1970s--to lack of trust in the schools and professional educators. However, for school-aged children, it also suggests that teachers are not willing to be involved in programs which use parents as actual instructors in the home. Such a role may threaten both parents and teachers.

Parents in Staff Roles

Although Federally sponsored programs such as Follow Through, Head Start, and Title I, and some locally developed programs all employ parents of participating children as classroom aides and as family-community workers, direct evidence regarding impacts of this type of parent involvement on child outcomes is extremely limited. A possible explanation for the dearth of findings is the fact that programs involving parents as staff members often introduce a number of other changes into the classroom at the same time--e.g., new curricula, different teaching methods. Thus, even if the overall program produces measurable improvements in child achievement, it is difficult to attribute these improvements to any single component of the program.

Preschool Children

There are some findings regarding the use of paraprofessional staff in home visit and other early childhood (i.e., preschool) education programs. In general, positive impacts on participating children have been demonstrated, both in projects staffed primarily by paraprofessionals and in projects where direct comparisons could be made between groups

with paraprofessional staff members and groups with professionals (Lazar and Chapman, 1972).

School-Aged Children

The applicability of findings from programs for preschool children to those aimed at older pupils is, of course, limited. Activities appropriate to classrooms in the elementary grades and beyond are very different from those which characterize preschool centers. Furthermore, a professional may bear the primary responsibility for a group of children at the preschool level, particularly if she has been trained. But an aide employed in a classroom with older children works under the direct supervision of a teacher.

There do not seem to be any formal studies which have examined the impacts of employing parents, either as classroom aides or as community workers, on the achievement of disadvantaged school-aged children. Some Follow Through sponsors have made informal observations comparing their programs' effects with and without the assistance of parent aides in the class, but these studies do not distinguish between the sheer number of classroom adults and parents as classroom adults. An informal study of two sites using the Follow Through model developed at the University of Kansas (which involves parents on a rotating basis as drill practice teachers in the classroom) has shown differences in child achievement that appear to be due to the presence of more trained parent aides versus fewer trained parent aides (Lynn Weis, personal communication). Preliminary evidence from a more formal study in kindergarten groups shows the same trends but it is not clear whether this is a model-specific phenomenon, since the training of parent aides is quite rigorous and parent roles are strictly specified in the Kansas model.

Parents as Decision Makers

Preschool Children

A recent survey of Head Start at MIDCO, in Denver (Charles Mowry, personal communication) repeated the Coleman finding that higher levels of parent involvement were associated with higher levels of achievement in children. Mowry and his colleagues measured the impact--on the children, the parents themselves, and the community--of parent involvement in decision making and in learning roles. With regard to effects on the children, they found that children of parents highly involved with both decision-making and learning showed the greatest achievement, while children of parents involved in either one of the roles had better achievement scores than children of non-participating parents. However, since there is much self-selection in participation, it is very likely that the children of parents who participated were already better achievers. Neither pre-participation measures nor adequate control groups were used to test this possibility. It is difficult to imagine how a study could be conducted to correct entirely for the difficulties inherent in Mowry's survey, but some suggestions are made in Section VI.

School-Aged Children

An evaluation was conducted in the Rough Rock demonstration school (a former BIA school) in Arizona, run by a five-member Indian community school board with full control of personnel and policy decisions. The study found no evidence of impressive gains in academic subjects on the part of the students. The local people, and sympathizers from the research community and elsewhere, felt that the evaluation was premature since they had concerned themselves with personnel decisions and Navajo

curricula, and were just beginning to give priority to academic areas over staffing.* They felt that their original emphasis on "Indianness" was justifiable in light of their history and believed that increased attendance rates and the popularity of the school with the community were significant indications of the project's success (Tunley, 1971).

The effects of parental participation in decision-making on children's academic performance are particularly difficult to measure and evaluate. First, the changes expected in parent attitudes or in school programs as a result of this sort of participation would have longer delayed impacts on children than would direct tutoring or direct classroom contact. Second, decision-making roles almost never occur in the absence of change in other roles, so their independent contribution to child outcomes cannot be assessed readily. Finally, there is the possibility that, for some groups where parents had a significant decision-making power, scores on standard achievement tests would not be measured because the parents cared much more about other outcomes or, if measured, would show no difference, for the same reason.

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*Some of the criticisms and a defense of the evaluation by its director, Donald Erickson, are included in a series of articles entitled "Skirmish at Rough Rock" (1970).

V THE IMPACTS OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT: KNOWLEDGE AND SPECULATION

Section IV considered evidence supporting the simple hypothesis that parent involvement (in one or more roles) leads to improved child achievement. In general, that evidence supports the participation of parents as tutors of their own children. There is only a little direct evidence that employing parents as classroom aides and community workers, or involving them as decision-makers, will bring about improvements in the academic performance either of the children of parents so involved or of other children in the same program.

In looking for solutions to the problems of specifying parent involvement and its effects upon children, it is useful to reconsider the original hypothesis. Why is parent involvement expected to benefit the academic performance of children? For each parent role (tutor, staff, decision-maker) that we have considered, we can hypothesize sets of events which are supposed to be set in motion by parent involvement and lead to successful academic performance by children. These sets of events have been gathered from the rhetoric supporting parent participation--from Federal guidelines, program descriptions, and various position papers which argue in favor of parent participation. (In some cases the original arguments support participation by the low-income community in general in anti-poverty programs or, on an even broader scope, in the various community-wide institutions.)

Describing the chains of events helps to clarify several fundamental issues and permits examination of specific linkages between parent involvement and child performance in school. Since the evidence currently available from the literature is equivocal, knowledge about specific

links in the chain will have to be developed; such knowledge is probably the only way to explain why a given program of parent involvement may be successful while another program, which at least superficially resembles the first, has very different impacts. In addition, these descriptions permit us to look for evidence from additional sources such as the psychological literature of child development and small group theory. These chains, of course, do not take into account all the possibilities, and, as Section VI will elaborate, extensive research is still needed to confirm or challenge these sets of hypotheses.

Parents as Tutors

Most of the research on parent participation has focused on this type of role, and evidence is available, including the information mentioned above concerning academic outcomes (especially for preschoolers). Several types of evidence are also available which support some of the intermediate links in the hypothetical chains of events from parents as learners to children as achievers (Figure 1).

The three chains in this figure may be characterized in terms of their principal channels:

(A) Increased student motivation

(B) Increased student skills

(C) Improved parent self image

There is evidence which suggests that Chain C may actually be the most powerful. The Coleman study (Coleman et al., 1966) found that the factor most strongly associated with a child's achievement is his sense of control over his own fate (Chain C). While none of the psychological literature is clear on how much attitudes as a "sense of control" or "feelings of powerlessness" are transmitted from parent to child, it is

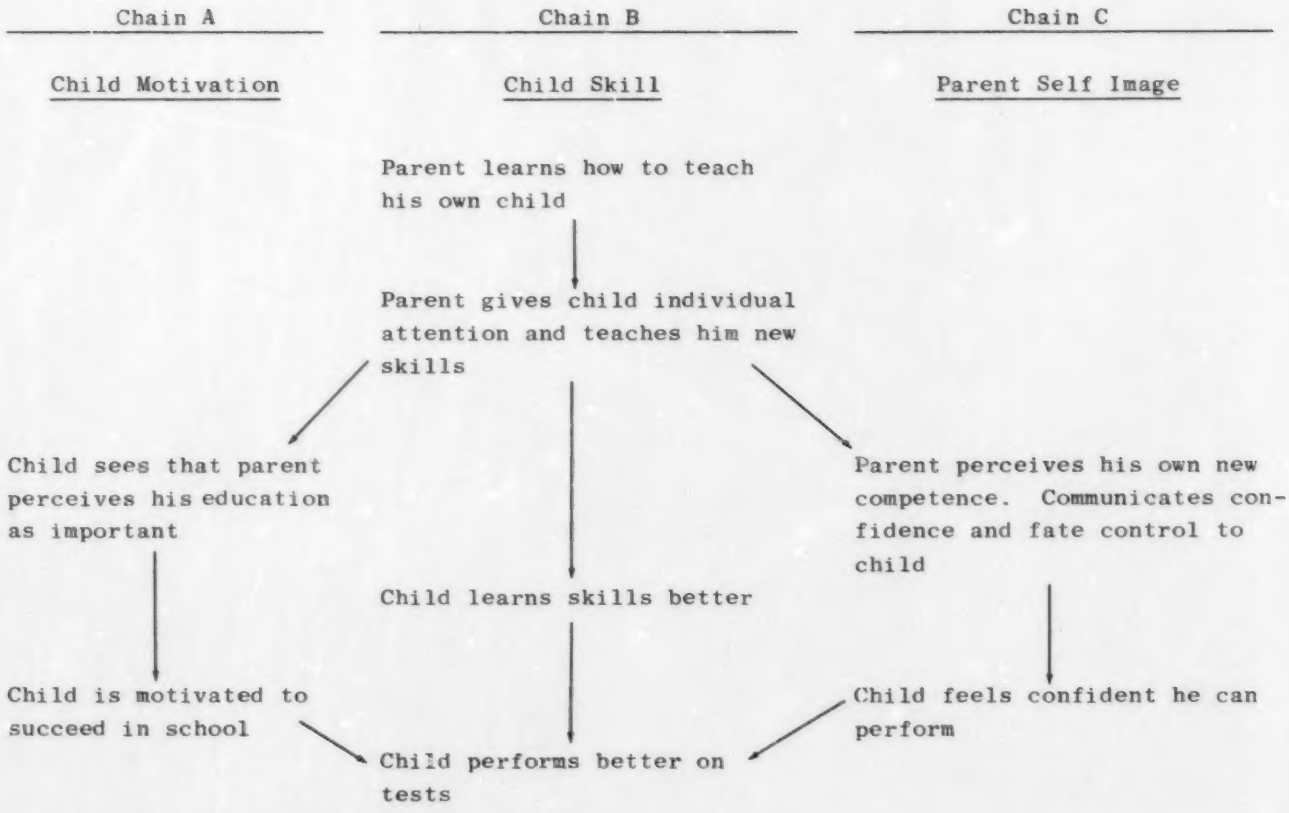

Chain A
Chain B
Chain C
Child Motivation
Child Skill
Parent Self Image
Parent learns how to teach his own child
Parent gives child individual attention and teaches him new skills
Child sees that parent perceives his education as important
Parent perceives his own new competence. Communicates confidence and fate control to child
Child learns skills better
Child is motivated to succeed in school
Child feels confident he can perform
Child performs better on tests

Figure 1: PARENTS AS LEARNERS AND AS TUTORS OF THEIR OWN CHILDREN

certainly reasonable to assume that parents play a causal role in the child's perception of himself.

Other studies confirm the relationship between training parents as tutors and improving child performance. However, it is not at all clear which chains in Figure 1 are actually occurring, or, if they are all occurring, which is the most powerful. Does the child perform better because he has had intensive, individual practice on certain academic skills (Chain B), or because attention from his mother has made him feel that education is important and that he will please his parents by performing well (Chain A)?

The best summary of pertinent studies is in Robert D. Hess' chapter on "Parental Behavior and Children's School Achievement" in a book on day care (Hess, 1969). Hess finds evidence that parents who set higher achievement standards for their children (Chain A), converse with their children more, have a higher regard for themselves and their children (Chain C), and use reasons and explanations rather than references to authority to sanction behavior (Chain B) have children with higher levels of achievement. Nearly all of the studies he cites are correlational. Nevertheless, such evidence tends to support the notion that if parents could learn specific skills as tutors or reinforcers of the child's learning, the child's achievement would be boosted.

Similarly the Mowry study of Head Start, cited earlier, which specifically included one group of parents as learners, also provides correlational evidence that higher levels of parent involvement are associated with higher levels of achievement in children (although, as noted, the study is subject to some methodological criticism).

These studies confirm the hypothesis that parents can change their interaction styles with their young children in certain ways so that the children are likely to perform better in school. There are many

model programs that indicate ways in which such good effects can be achieved. Future successes would require increased understanding not only of why the particular interaction styles influence children but also of the conditions under which parents can be induced to change in ways that will promote their children's growth.

Parents as Paid Paraprofessionals

The hypothetical chains of events from parent as employee to increases in child achievement are illustrated in Figure 2. Since the paying of parents has economic and professional as well as personal consequences, the hypotheses required to explain effects on children are more numerous and more complicated. Evidence in this area has certainly not been obtained systematically. As indicated earlier, the direct educational outcome of participation in these roles has not yet even been investigated.

The five chains shown in Figure 2 may be characterized as follows:

(A) Increased community understanding (legitimacy)

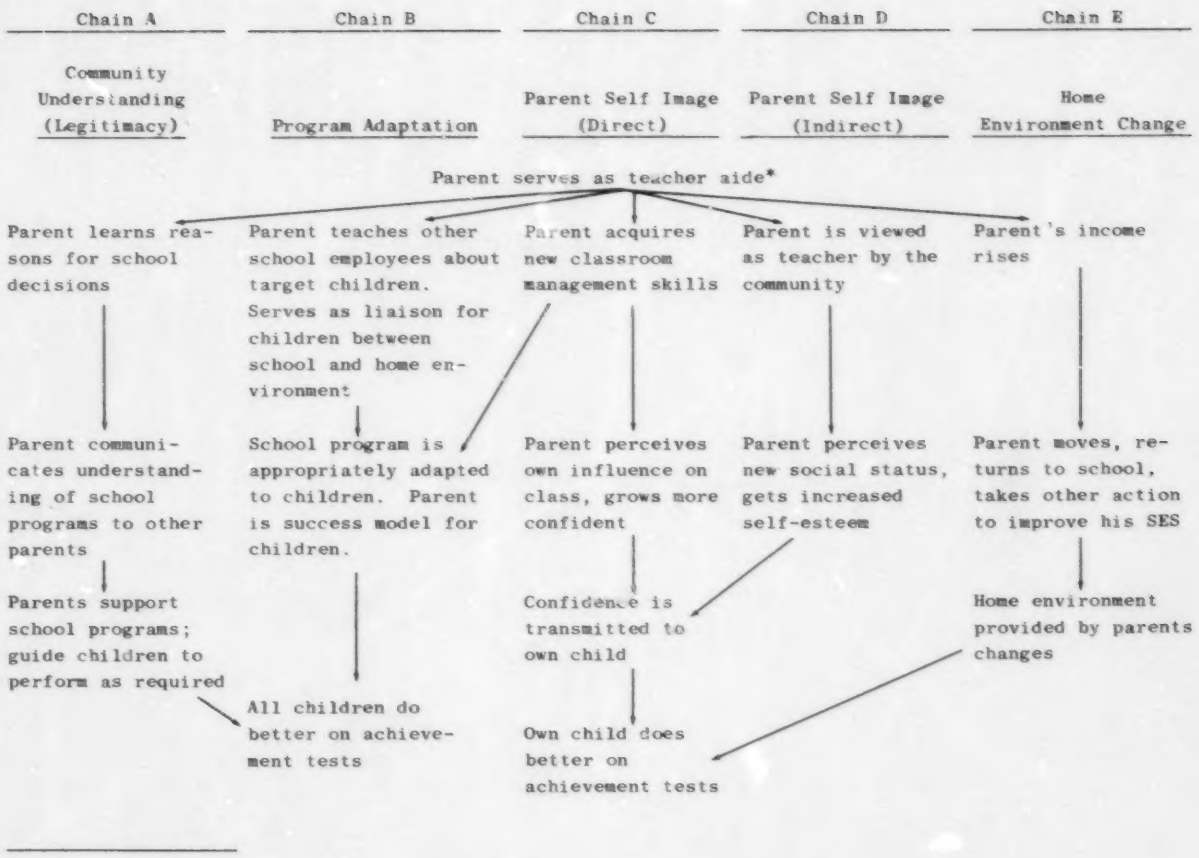
(B) School program adaptation

(C) Improved parent self image (direct)

(D) Improved parent self image (indirect)

(E) Home environment changes.

Chain A - Increased Community Understanding--is certainly the most speculative of the five. It deals with the many and probably varied presumed positive effects of parent/staff members on other parents and so on their children. While anecdotal evidence may abound, there is no solid experimentation to elaborate or support it.


Chain A
Chain B
Chain C
Chain D
Chain E
Community Understanding (Legitimacy)
Program Adaptation
Parent Self Image (Direct)
Parent Self Image (Indirect)
Home Environment Change
Parent serves as teacher aide*
Parent learns reasons for school decisions
Parent teaches other school employees about target children. Serves as liaison for children between school and home environment
Parent acquires new classroom management skills
Parent is viewed as teacher by the community
Parent's income rises
Parent communicates understanding of school programs to other parents
School program is appropriately adapted to children. Parent is success model for children.
Parent perceives own influence on class, grows more confident
Parent perceives new social status, gets increased self-esteem
Parent moves, returns to school, takes other action to improve his SES
Parents support school programs; guide children to perform as required
Confidence is transmitted to own child
Home environment provided by parents changes
All children do better on achievement tests
Own child does better on achievement tests

*If parent were employed as school-home coordinator, Chain A would be elaborated.

Figure 2: PARENTS AS PARAPROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES IN THE SCHOOL PROGRAM

Chain B - School Program Adaptation--the use of paraprofessional employees changes the school administration as well as the children's experiences in school. Evidence from a classroom observation study conducted as part of the SRI Follow Through evaluation revealed that the presence of aides in Follow Through affected the amount of individual attention received by children in the classroom. Presence of aides was also associated with a wider variety of activities in the classroom (SRI, 1972).

Chain C - Improved Parent Self Image (direct)--is essentially the same as Chain C in Figure 1, and again the studies by Hess and Coleman lend support to the hypothesized set of events.

Chain D - Improved Parent Self Image (indirect)--is a minor variation of Chain C, and from sociological and psychological studies discussed above, we know that certain attitude and behavior changes on the part of the parent--especially positive changes in self-esteem--are likely to have good effects on his own child's attitudes and subsequent achievement. More pertinent are several studies and myriad anecdotes that document the "success" experiences of previously unemployed, low self-esteem mothers who have become school employees (Stearns, 1971).

Chain E - Home Environment Changes--is essentially a hypothesis about socioeconomic status change. We can usually presume that if a paraprofessional's salary significantly affects the family's financial status, it will reduce family strains and enhance the attitude of the recipient toward himself. If this occurs, the probability increases that the child of that parent employee will eventually be better able to perform well in school. There is a great deal of sociological literature which deals with this general phenomenon, but we have found no studies

dealing directly with this entire chain of effects with respect to the actual employment of parents as school paraprofessionals.

Parents as Decision Makers

There are no definitive studies that have traced the effects on children of parents in decision-making roles. This is primarily a result of the fact that programs which include parents in decision-making roles often also involve parents in tutoring or staff roles. The chains of events shown in Figure 3 are gross and undifferentiated indeed, and when one considers how each of the five types of power involvement in decision-making (mentioned in Section II) can probably affect the chains of events differently, the complexity becomes doubly impressive. The impact on children of parental attitudes resulting from the parents in placation roles would be expected to be quite different from parent participation in a formal, information/advisory role. Nevertheless, there are a few general links in the chains for which evidence is available, particularly concerning the effects of various types of decision-making participation on the parents themselves. The three chains can be characterized as:

(A) Community understanding (legitimacy)

(B) Program adaptation

(C) Parent fate control.

Chain A - Community Understanding--there is not a great deal of evidence directly supporting the first hypothetical chain, but some studies do support at least the first link in this chain. The literature on small group studies provides numerous examples in which experience of significant involvement in group decision-making tends to strengthen the satisfaction of participants with their membership, enhance their self-images, and facilitate changes in attitudes (Chains A, C). In addition,

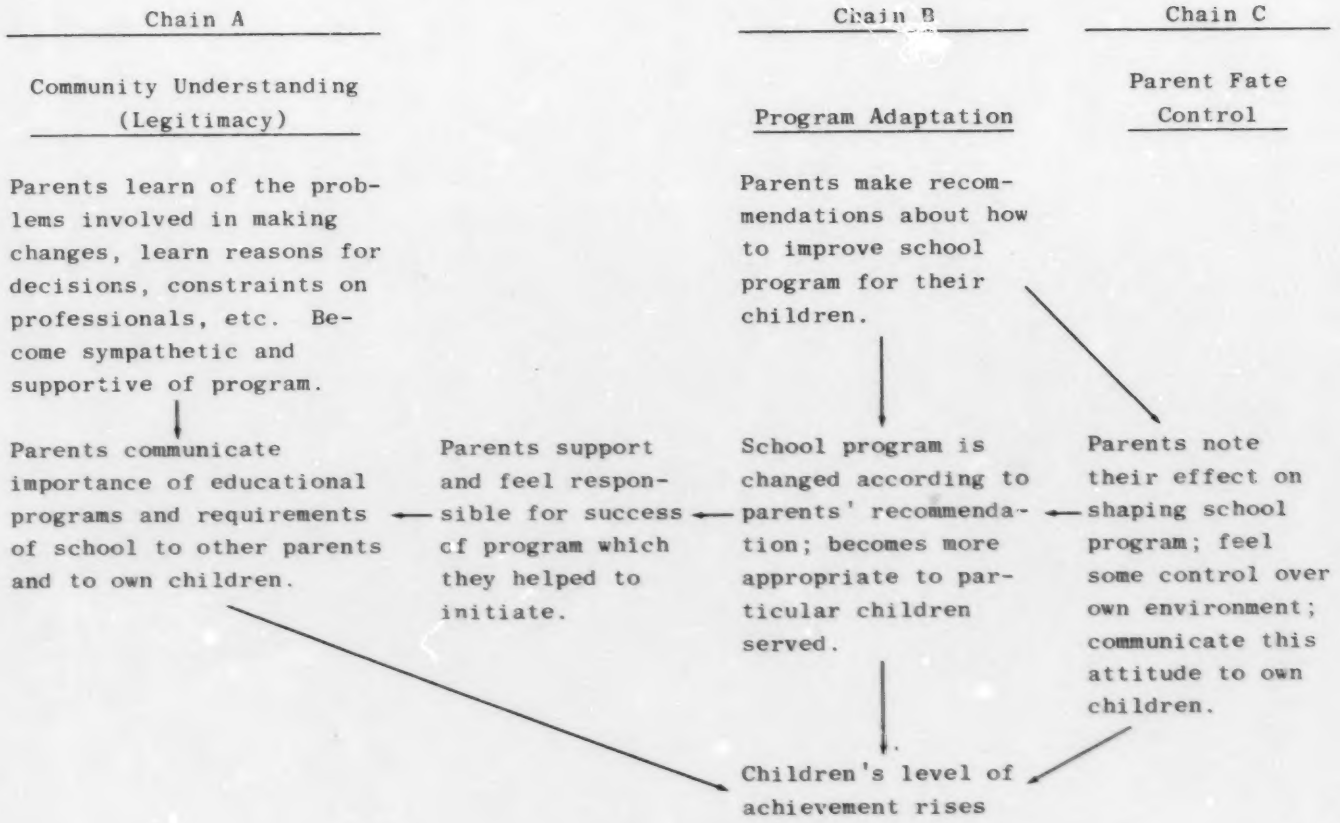

Chain A
Community Understanding (Legitimacy)
Parents learn of the problems involved in making changes, learn reasons for decisions, constraints on professionals, etc. Become sympathetic and supportive of program.
Parents communicate importance of educational programs and requirements of school to other parents and to own children.
Chain B
Program Adaptation
Parents make recommendations about how to improve school program for their children.
Parents support and feel responsible for success of program which they helped to initiate.
School program is changed according to parents' recommendation; becomes more appropriate to particular children served.
Chain C
Parent Fate Control
Parents note their effect on shaping school program; feel some control over own environment; communicate this attitude to own children.
Children's level of achievement rises

Figure 3: PARENTS AS DECISION MAKERS

there is some evidence from the Follow Through program regarding impacts on parents. Parent satisfaction with the program has been measured as relatively high, and parents of Follow Through children have become more involved with the school than parents of children in comparison groups (Emrick et al., 1973).

Chain B - Program Adaptation--this chain is, in some ways, more specific and, by comparison to other chains, is supported by many more bits of evidence. But again, the evidence deals with the first steps in the chain rather than the last. A study of a small sample of Follow Through local project PACs (Oura, in press) concluded that the level of actual authority exercised by the PAC in general had grown as the project evolved. In its early days the typical PAC encountered the familiar obstacles to participation by low-income parents, had to concern itself with a number of organizational problems, and exercised little authority. However, by the end of the 1971-72 school year, PAC involvement in planning and operating the local projects had grown.

Findings from another study offer support for the early links in Chain B, although not relating solely to parents. Gittell (1970) studied various community groups and their potential role as change agents. She found that civil rights groups tended to be critical of the schools and other established institutions. Although their direct impact on institutions was not generally very strong (mainly because they had no formal powers vis-à-vis the schools), they had a decided indirect impact when they publicly asked questions and raised issues about the operations of location institutions. Gittell also reports that in cities without vocal community groups, institutions tended to be inflexible. The investigator concluded that "innovation can be achieved only as a result of strong community participation which has the power to compel both new programs and the increases in expenditure necessary to finance them." (Gittell, 1970, p. 74)

The second link in Chain B--actual changes in the institution--is supported by two studies. Evidence from Follow Through case studies conducted between 1968 and 1970 suggested a connection between the level of parent participation in a local project and the level of institutional change within the project and the community (SRI, 1971).

A study conducted by Kirschner Associates (1970) also supports this hypothesis. This study of selected Head Start projects looked for four types of changes in health- and education-related institutions in Head Start and comparison communities:

> --Increased involvement of the poor with institutions, particularly at decision-making levels and in decision-making capacities
>
> --Increased institutional employment of local persons in paraprofessional occupations
>
> --Greater educational emphasis on the particular needs of the poor and of minorities
>
> --Modification of health institutions and practices to serve the poor better and more sensitively. (p. 4)

In all Head Start communities studied, changes were found to have occurred in at least three of the change areas listed. In addition, all communities showed changes in both health- and education-related institutions, with educational changes typically outnumbering health changes. Although it was difficult to discover if Head Start and non-Head Start communities were comparable to begin with, examination of the comparison communities did reveal parental apathy and very few changes in any of the institutions considered in the study. Kirschner Associates concluded that Head Start had had some influence on all the education-related changes and most of the health-related changes (in essentially supportive roles, since Head Start lacks authority to control most existing community agencies). Head Start influence ranged from relatively minor to crucial and in many cases had continued through several stages of the change

process. The Kirschner report concluded that Head Start had been influential in the changes identified more often at those sites where parent involvement was classified as high than at those sites with low involvement of parents. The difference was significant, and the researchers concluded that a relationship did seem to exist between the degree of parent involvement in Head Start and the extent of Head Start involvement in institutional change.*

Chain C - Parent Fate Control--the validity of this chain is supported by three principal findings. First, a study of an OEO poverty program council conducted by Zurcher (1970) verified its two central hypotheses of (1) initial differences between poverty and non-poverty representatives on feelings of powerlessness, anomie, and other social-psychological variables associated with a sense of confidence and competence, and (2) positive changes in perceptions of power and other variables for the low-income members after participating on the council.

Further evidence that at least some parents have moved successfully into new roles and achieved some degree of "significant" participation, which they wish to continue and even to expand, was offered at the Denver Follow Through Conference held in October 1972. Representatives of local project PACs at the conference united to form a national PAC and demanded recognition for a parent group which would have authority to influence decisions made at the Federal level affecting the entire program. If nothing else, this demonstrates the powerful psychological influence the government has exercised by creating local PAC decision-making roles for parents of disadvantaged children, suggesting that Chain C may be working, at least for some parents.

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* The Kirschner study cautions that this finding must be considered tentative, since their measure of level of parent involvement was derived from data whose validity could not be fully verified.

Finally, a study specifically connected with low-income participants in an OEO community action program demonstrated a statistically significant decrease in feelings of powerlessness associated with longer service in organizing the community (Gottesfeld and Dozier, 1966).

These studies are encouraging. However, it is important to bear in mind that none of the studies or events cited here in connection with decision-making roles connects these chains to the final link--increased student achievement.

Speculations on Why Programs Fail

As we have described in the previous sections, for each role, parent involvement is expected to set in motion events that will ultimately have positive impacts on the disadvantaged student. However, for the most part, these hypotheses are all positive, showing how events might go well. They do not take into account all the possibilities; it is important to consider the ways in which these programs can get "derailed."

While there is little or no hard research evidence to support the hypotheses discussed below, a great deal of anecdotal and presumptive evidence can be adduced. It would seem that parent participation in any of the basic roles can be thwarted at several different levels.

Problems of Participation

The primary reason why parent involvement most often fails to have an impact on child achievement is because there is in fact no involvement or it is only minimal. Obtaining participation of parents is certainly the greatest difficulty for parent education programs. To have any impact on parents' life styles or ways of allocating time to their children or methods of interacting with their children, the participation of parents must be intensive. There are several reasons why participation

doesn't occur. The main reasons, for low-income parents especially, are the pressures of meeting survival needs and feelings of psychological inferiority or social inadequacy. If strategies for ameliorating these feelings do not exist, then parents in learner/tutor roles cannot be expected to have lasting impact on their children's achievement.

Participation of parents as staff paraprofessionals is easier to obtain, but so few paid positions are available that the number of eligible parents directly participating in this way cannot be great.

Although there is documentation regarding participation in formal decision-influencing bodies (e.g., PACs) for some OE programs, the information collected has often been restricted to membership lists. This kind of information does not explain why a given program generates a high level of initial enthusiasm and attendance at meetings that is subsequently not sustained, while another program evokes less immediate response by parents but gradually gains in popularity and ultimately develops a strong decision-making group.

While for some parents lack of participation in any of the roles considered here may be explained simply by the presence of too many practical obstacles, the lack may also be a symptom of problems within the program itself. Parents may lose their initial enthusiasm when anticipated resources fail to materialize, when effective lines of communication do not develop between themselves and the local or Federal program staff, or when the desired results are not obtained. They may also fail to participate if they perceive the goals and priorities established for their program by other stakeholder groups as so different from their own intentions that reconciliation appears unlikely or impossible and participation appears futile.

Problems in Implementation

In some schools and in rare school districts, everything seems to favor effective parent participation: parents and school personnel agree on a program and level of participation, and are basically cooperative in an innovative venture. Nevertheless, one or more administrative problems arise in the course of implementing the desired innovations that eventually subvert the effort. Parents may lack the detailed financial or program information needed to operate effectively in decision-making roles, and in fact the school or district is unable (though not necessarily unwilling) to provide the information. Parents in staff or tutorial roles often simply lack the needed skills and local districts cannot mobilize adequate training programs.

Even when parent groups and school personnel are basically cooperative and overcome such administrative hazards, programs may still go astray when the means provided fail to match the envisioned ends--i.e., increased child achievement. Parents may demand some change in the school program, and its implementation by the professional educators may produce no impact or even apparent ill effects rather than the anticipated benefits to the children.

Parent involvement in PACs has sometimes failed to affect children's attitudes or achievement for the better, at least in the short run, because something else (e.g., integration, selection of a principal) became the main issue on which PAC and school personnel focused their attention. School administrators may be willing or able to change practices in only a few domains, e.g., curriculum, but parents have not always limited their concern to these relatively flexible areas. In fact, parents most often have centered their attention on certain personnel decisions--hiring or firing--and some of the power struggles that ensued probably modified

the school for the better. But as Zurcher has suggested (1970), evidence exists that these experiences can be alienating for both parties. In such situations, it does not seem likely the children benefit.

When programs are largely dependent on resources from outside the district, a further implementation difficulty is added, as local educational agencies and community members attempt to translate guidelines prepared at the state or Federal level into appropriate local action. For example, in projects which use parents as staff members, Federal guidelines can be difficult to translate when the requirements for fiscal comparability in Title I and Follow Through grants are not sufficiently flexible to allow for non-certified personnel, or when Federal requirements run counter to state personnel regulations or local union contracts.

Other problems may arise between the local project and the sponsoring agency that impede implementation. The projects are often subject to erratic and inadequate funding from state and Federal agencies; for instance, programs planned to begin in September are not funded until March, or working funds are frozen or shifted unpredictably from one school to another.

Finally, many projects just cannot and do not continue long enough to produce the intended effects. This is particularly the case with projects involving parents as decision-makers, where common sense tells us that making the decisions takes time, the decisions made take time to be acted upon, and actions only eventually affect some of the children some of the time.

Problems in Expectations

Each of the four conceptual models discussed earlier generates a different set of expectancies for parents, school personnel, and program administrators. When these stakeholder groups implicitly agree on the

model being used, and accept it as legitimate, projects appear to have a fair chance of success.* This is the case even when the model assumed is one of Environmental Deficit.

A dramatic example of this is the program instituted by Sam Shepard, superintendent of an all-black district in St. Louis. As reported by Waddles and Robinson (1970):

> Ostensibly, required home visits by teachers were to advise parents on how to help their children do homework by alloting time and study space. Really Shepard wanted his teachers exposed--many for the first time--to the seemingly hopeless home and neighborhood lives of their pupils. (p. 197)

The overall effect of the St. Louis program seems to have been to convince both parents and teachers that only by the enlightened intervention of educational professionals would the students overcome otherwise insurmountable environmental handicaps. The project seems to have revolved around Shepard's charismatic leadership of a very trusting target group. It apparently evolved from the stance that anything "different" from the mainstream, middle-class tradition is "deficient." Shepard's program worked dramatically well at raising pupils' achievement without any significant changes in classroom materials or study plans.

While Shepard's program is only a decade old, it may well be anachronistic already in terms of its underlying rationale and the willingness of parents (and sometimes teachers as well) to participate in such a

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*A report of research in Israel by the Smilanskis (August 1972) suggests that even programs which assume an Environmental Deficit model and which conscientiously exclude parents from involvement in their children's education may "succeed" in raising student achievement if, as in the case of Oriental Jewish parents there, the parents agree with the legitimacy of this approach. Similarly, the parents in certain low IQ groups in Milwaukee felt that it was in the best interests of their children that they be socialized by "experts" at the University of Wisconsin (Heber and Garber, 1970).

model. Many changes have occurred in the way low-income and minority-culture groups see themselves in relation to the predominantly white middle class and its institutions. Increasing racial and cultural pride have made it more difficult for low-income groups to accept without question the leadership or the values of the established white school system and other middle-class institutions.

The same techniques might still work to increase school achievement if parents and teachers were ignorant of the assumptions underlying the special program or if their self image were at such a low ebb that they submitted. This seems most unlikely, however, especially for large-scale, highly visible programs, where conflicts in assumptions and expectations may arise within the community or between the parents and any other stakeholder group and result in lack of participation or in disputes which inhibit successful implementation.

Besides the time and energy constraints, many low-income minority parents apparently feel that school personnel perceive them as ignorant (Raspberry, 1973). Parents report that their visits to school, or home visits by school personnel, are uncomfortable or embarrassing for them. They feel they do not belong, and are alienated from the school as an institution. It is not difficult to realize that principals and teachers, believing in the Environmental Deficit Model, have attitudes and behavior consistent with such a belief. No person eagerly participates in a program which communicates his deficiencies to him so effectively.

This dilemma is not confined to projects that seek to use or exclude parents in the tutorial role. Merely employing the parent as an aide should not necessarily be expected to affect parental self-esteem in a positive direction. Much depends on the attitude exhibited by the professional staff toward the parent as a staff member (Jacobson, 1971). If the parents are treated essentially as menial laborers and no career

opportunities are apparent, we cannot expect long term improvement in their self image, nor can we expect them to participate for very long.

One possible detour to involvement not so far considered is the failure of certain parents to participate because others participate: that is, although we generally assume low-income parents attached to the same school or school district represent a consensus, it may be that the participation of militants or people with a desire to carry out extraneous political purposes will make other parents reluctant to become involved.

A final obstacle to obtaining the participation of parents is that at least some low-income and minority people believe either that educational institutions are not amenable to change or that they are irrelevant to the needs of their community. There are today a number of minority and ethnic communities in which participation as a paraprofessional in the existing school system would make the parent's status highly ambiguous within the community and might confuse his self image rather than improve it. Some parents may be unwilling to accept even decision-making roles, since participation in a PAC might be seen as an endorsement of the school. In some Black communities in New York City or some Indian communities in New Mexico, it would be necessary for a parent to justify any involvement (particularly in an unpaid capacity) with a predominantly white middle-class institution.

The Rough Rock demonstration school illustrates another type of conflict in expectations. The Indian community school board believed that they had the authority to emphasize whatever they felt was important. They spent the first year replacing Anglo staff with Indian teaching staff and adding courses in Indian crafts, leaving most other phases of school management to the discretion of the director. When Erickson's evaluation was conducted and it was reported that Rough Rock had failed to attain increases in academic achievement, no one should have been

surprised, since the board had not given high priority to immediate changes in this area. Nevertheless, the evaluation was taken by some Federal sponsors as evidence that this parent involvement arrangement had failed. Thus, while there was apparent consensus at the local level regarding the project's immediate priorities and its attainment of those aims, there was fundamental disagreement between the community and the Federal program staff regarding the priority of certain academic skills.

In its most aggravated form, conceptual model differences lead to open conflict between stakeholder groups in local projects. The classic example of crossed models was in the Oceanhill-Brownsville community in New York, where teachers and school administrators saw decentralization of the school district as a threat to their security and prerogatives, while the parents in the community saw it as an opportunity to influence local school policies. The involuntary transfer of several teachers from the district precipitated a teacher strike and months of community conflict. However, the difficulty of conflicting expectations pervades major Federal programs as well.

Neither Title I nor Follow Through guidelines admit the possibility of such conflict. Title I guidelines assume that decision-making by school administrators and PACs will be in the consensus mode, that parents will be heard as partners in decision-making, and that decisions made will benefit children's ability to achieve in school. But the gentle wording of the guidelines does not take into account well-known potentials for misunderstanding. The guidelines advocate organized, structured parent groups with a real voice in decision-making, and they encourage groups that desire to do far more than simply advise (particularly if their early efforts cannot be seen to be effective). Because the guidelines ignore the possibility that conflict will occur, they provide no strategy either to reduce conflict or to ensure that it is constructive.

It is obvious that parents often feel more powerless after trying to affect educational institutions and programs than they did before. Alienation between the community and the school would then be a more likely result than mutual support. However, it does not appear that studies have been performed directly to trace the events actually occurring in such large scale programs as Title I.

Zurcher (1970) suggests that this kind of conflict is a natural outcome of the differences in attitudes that people of differing socio-economic status bring with them to decision-making roles. His answer to the problem of conflict is not to attempt to avoid it but rather to provide process-oriented training in order to minimize its negative consequences.

Whatever the solution, it is clear that a mutual understanding by all participants (including Federal policy makers) of the working model, its assumptions and consequences, is essential if Federal programs which involve low-income and minority parents are to avoid repeated instances of co-optation, non-participation, and open conflict.

VI DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

As the preceding discussion has revealed, parent participation in compensatory education exists in many forms and can have consequences for the parents themselves, their own and other children in the programs, teachers and administrators, and possibly broad segments of the educational system and other major social institutions. Nevertheless, the state of empirical knowledge concerning parent participation in compensatory education is limited, considering the large number of people who have been encouraged--indeed, practically required--to participate. The studies conducted to date on programs with parent involvement, especially those studies examining parent decision-making roles, have produced little direct evidence regarding impacts on the children.

There are three possible explanations for lack of unequivocal, positive findings. It may be that the notions behind parent involvement are faulty--certainly, sheer involvement of parents in educational programs does not automatically produce increases in child achievement. It is also possible that the notions have not been tested because of difficulties arising in implementing parent participation. Perhaps parents have not become involved in the manner or to the extent necessary to produce the desired effects in their children. A third possibility is the problem of measurement. If the criteria used to measure participation or its impacts are inadequate or inappropriate, they fail to describe involvement accurately or to detect its true impacts. And measurements can sometimes be made prematurely, thus missing the impact.

Especially with regard to involvement in decision-making, it appears not that the theory of parent participation has been tested and found wanting but rather that it has not been adequately tested. Some kinds of involvement may produce changes in children's achievement and some may not. Sophisticated models of parent involvement in decision-making have not yet been formulated and therefore have not been put to test.

We feel that the success or failure of parent involvement in terms of enhancing children's school performance is at this time largely unproven and that further research is warranted. Relatively little is known even in Federally-sponsored programs about how many parents actually participate, about their participatory roles and, with the exception of the preschool tutoring role, about the consequences of their participation. The literature on evaluation of parent involvement in educational programs includes frequent references to problems both in implementation and in measurement. A major limitation of most evidence collected to date results from the failure of both theory and measurement to make more than gross distinctions among ways in which parents become involved. Thus attempts are made to evaluate "parents as decision makers" without fully documenting the nature of their intended or actual involvement. Without finer distinctions it is impossible either to formulate hypotheses that can be tested empirically or to distinguish between "successful" and "unsuccessful" forms of involvement and strategies for eliciting it.

The suggestions for research outlined below advocate extensive documentation as a preliminary to evaluating the impacts of parent involvement. Information should be collected regarding both the nature of the intended parent involvement in a program and the actual occurrences. For example, in the area of decision-making, information should be collected on the types of decisions parents influence, on the level of their authority (authority only to make suggestions, power to approve or disapprove decisions already made, or authority to make decisions themselves),

and on the mechanism through which they act (appointed ad hoc committee, elected permanent group, etc.). Additional information would include the extent of parent involvement (how many parents devote how much time), the scope of their involvement (in Federally funded compensatory programs only or also in regular school district affairs), and the kinds of information and assistance made available to both parents and local project staff.

Such documentation would serve several purposes. It would provide clearer understanding of intended goals and priorities and thus assist greatly in the formulation of hypotheses which would reflect the assumptions of the programs' organizers and participants. Once the goals were made clear, it would then be possible to develop better measures to assess how well the programs were meeting their goals. This approach is particularly essential to programs which consider impact on child achievement as a goal that is important but not immediately realizable, since it would enable assessment of intermediate effects of parent participation.

Finally, systematic documentation of expectations and actual occurrences would assist in identifying sources of program success and failure. Failure may result from inadequate implementation--expected resources are not made available, or the anticipated level of participation is not reached. As was noted in the previous section, however, failure may also be caused by conflicts in expectations. Since information regarding intentions would be collected from several stakeholder groups--parents, local project staff, sponsoring agency personnel--it should be possible to identify such conflicts. In the case of successful programs, this documentation would provide evidence of realistic expectations for parent roles and successful strategies for eliciting participation and support.

The approach suggested here does not require establishment of new programs with a parent participation component. Earlier portions of this paper have demonstrated the variety of programs already in existence, many of them under the sponsorship of the Office of Education. Descriptive studies of these ongoing programs could yield findings of great value, particularly regarding the decision-making roles which are required in many OE programs. Findings from such studies would contribute to development of hypotheses describing the presumed paths from parent involvement to child achievement in ways that could be tested empirically. Ultimately, more refined evaluations should increase our understanding of precise techniques for enlisting full parent cooperation and participation in activities known to benefit them and their children. When accurate information is available about what happens and why, it will be possible to develop guidelines and suggestions for involving parents in roles that are not only theoretically effective but also realistic.

Parents as Tutors

Tutoring by parents has been shown to be an effective way of improving the performance of preschool children. What remains to be demonstrated is that parent participation of this general kind works with school-aged children as well. As was noted above, our understanding of learning patterns in older children and of appropriate modes of parent/child interactions is limited. For this reason, two kinds of studies are needed: observational and experimental. The first will document natural patterns of parent/child interactions and their differential effects on the children. Once more information is available on the sets of parental behavior (in particular, parent/child interactions) that are associated with the child's success in school, experimental studies can be conducted to discover promising techniques for training parents. It may be that

the most appropriate role for parents is supportive rather than directly tutorial--i.e., demonstrating an interest in the child's school work and providing an atmosphere at home that is conducive to study rather than concentrating on content drill.

This two-phased sequence, essentially identical to the sequence which culminated in the development of tutoring programs for parents of preschool-aged children, would confirm the potential benefits to school-aged children of involving their parents in tutorial or supportive roles.

However, such studies would leave unanswered certain questions with significant policy implications. Since high levels of parent cooperation and participation are essential to the success of any tutorial program, and have often been difficult to obtain (or maintain), policy-makers need to know what factors contribute to the success or failure of attempts to encourage involvement. Examination of programs that have been particularly effective in stimulating involvement may reveal some common features which can be incorporated in other tutorial programs.

If, as we hypothesize, the underlying assumptions of the program itself affect the degree of parental participation, it would be useful to compare tutorial participation in programs based on the different models described in Section II. It seems to us likely that programs which emphasize decision-making roles should also elicit a significant degree of willingness for tutorial participation whether or not the tutors are also decision-makers.* In programs based solely on the Environmental Deficit Model (or in other programs with no parental decision-making roles), tutorial participation would probably be low.

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*Some evidence is available from a study of several Follow Through sites that projects in which particular emphasis was given to involvement of parents in collective forms (e.g., participation in the PAC) were characterized by relatively strong parent involvement in both collective and individual forms (Oura, in press).

Parents as Paid Paraprofessionals

Since some reviews are available to describe the activities of parents involved as paid employees, but no studies of how children are affected by them have been conducted, a primary research need would be met by a study of effects on the parents so involved, on their children and other children in the same programs, and on the program operations in general. Especially useful would be examinations of whether the effects differ with the ways in which parent employees actually function. (It was pointed out in Section II that aides may perform only clerical or support functions, or they may actually assist in instructional tasks; in addition, there may or may not be visible long range career opportunities for parent employees in compensatory education programs.)

Evaluation of the connections between employment of parents and effects on children is particularly complicated by the fact that some hypotheses are presumed to operate only on the children of employees while others are assumed to affect all children in the classroom (compare, for example, Chains C, D, and E on Figure 2 to Chains A and B). Studying the chains that operate only on the children of participants would provide measurements on so few individuals that they would not be likely to produce reliable estimates of impact. Measuring outcomes at the child level may be less appropriate than measuring changes in attitudes and increases in family SES (education level, income) resulting from employing parents as paraprofessionals, and presuming consequent benefits for children.

To discover classroom effects of having paid teachers' aides who are program parents, it might be possible to compare compensatory education classrooms with paid parent aides to those with paid aides who are not parents of participating children, although the problem of matching classrooms on other relevant variables (or of statistically accounting for differences) are serious.

Much more useful would be studies that explored the effects of different kinds of teacher/aide working relationships. It seems reasonable to assume that children are more likely to benefit when the teacher and the aide have similar expectations for their own roles and for the children than when conflicts in expectations prevent the teacher and aide from establishing a relationship perceived by either as satisfactory. Information describing teacher and aide attitudes and activities could be collected through direct survey and through observation. For example, aides could describe any training they have received or would like to receive, and teachers could discuss the training they consider appropriate for aides. It may be that some aides feel uncomfortable assuming certain responsibility or that in some areas they would prefer greater responsibility. Observation of classroom processes would add a more objective view of how teachers and aides function and (through comparison with classrooms in which aides are not present) at least suggest what impacts aides have on classroom procedures.

The effects on child achievement of employing parents in community liaison roles is almost impossible to measure directly. A more appropriate approach to evaluation of this type of role would again include documentation of attitudes and activities, and examination of more immediate impacts. For example, what activities do parents in these roles perform that succeed in eliciting support from other parents and the community in general, and how do they promote cooperation and communication between the school and the community?

Unintended side effects on parents and children also deserve study. Jacobsen (1971) has suggested that employment of mothers as teacher-aides may lead to marital disruption, for example. Clearly this is an area which bears investigation that is as scientific and free of value judgment as possible. The classic debate over working mothers may take on a

different character when applied to a poverty environment, and a change in employment patterns may lead to different adjustments of family patterns than are found in a middle class structure.

Parents as Decision Makers

The first priority in studies of decision-making should be given to an elaboration of the chains of events, both positive and negative, that have been described by people involved in parent participation projects and people who have reviewed the literature on citizen participation. A description of actual events would permit extensive elaboration of a chart such as Figure 3 and would clarify issues in (1) eliciting and sustaining participation, (2) defining roles, (3) describing likely alliances, (4) describing influence and power relationships. This approach would employ a case study design where extensive documentation of events and their likely causes would lead to development of a set of testable hypotheses.

The nature of the decision-making processes themselves, as they are actually carried out in Federal programs for the disadvantaged, and parents' roles in these processes, appear to be largely a matter of conjecture. Studies are needed to specify how parents actually function in their roles as decision-makers (in comparison with, or in contrast to, how guidelines say they ought to function). In what kinds of decisions are they involved? Are they simply advisors or do they actually make some decisions? Are their decisions implemented? Do they actually bring about changes? Do parents function as an organized, permanent body or do they join forces on an ad hoc basis?

Once this kind of descriptive information has been collected, it would be possible to conduct a study that would basically be a refinement of the study by Mowry of the multiple effects of various types and

combinations of parental participation roles in Head Start programs. This study represents an important advance over earlier research. The finding that different amounts and kinds of participation lead to increased achievement is, of course, very provocative. But, as mentioned earlier, the study has inherent flaws that make it impossible to determine whether the connection between parent involvement and child achievement is causal or merely associational--i.e., some third factor predicts both involvement and achievement.

Ideally, children in such a study should be measured before and after their parents' participation, so that there would be some possibility of statistically adjusting for, or at least acknowledging, the initial differences between participant and non-participant groups. In addition, the Mowry study distinguishes only between "learners" and "decision makers" and thus fails to capture the full range of parent involvement. Fuller description of actual parent roles would enable examination of differential impacts of varying types and degrees of participation.

For the types of studies suggested here, it is not likely that true experimental conditions can be observed (random selection of treatment and control subjects, clear distinctions between types of decision-making roles, etc.). Probably the most useful evaluation strategy would be simply to examine many naturally occurring situations and to study--through interview, non-reactive measures, and observation--just how certain kinds of participation seem to affect parents and their children over time. The variety of situations would permit some testing of hypotheses. For example, if a great number of parents were found serving as PAC members in essentially advisory roles, some might have relatively little information about the subjects on which they were advising while others were given a great deal of information and technical assistance. Evaluators could determine whether the latter group felt sure about their influence while the former group felt dissatisfied

because their advice received little attention or because decisions proved to have unforeseen consequences. Children of the two parent groups could also be observed (blind) both in and out of school to detect any differences in their attitudes toward themselves and toward school.

Because the educational impacts of parental participation in decision-making are presumably more indirect than, say, those of tutoring, it is important to allow sufficient time for participation to have an effect before attempting any summative evaluation. Both immediate and long term effects on children of parents' decision-making in schools should be measured. Study of programs considered successful will aid in development of realistic time expectations for future programs.

Another cluster of research questions and problems concerns general techniques for improving the decision-making process. For example, what incentives are appropriate for motivating LEAs to bring parents into decision-making? Is extra money needed for parent involvement? What kinds of technical assistance, if any, are needed for parents? For school administrators? After a survey to obtain answers to such questions, experimentation could explore several approaches. For example, if conflict is an inevitable and potentially productive aspect of decision-making in these programs, would special training (i.e., in conflict resolution) help school officials and/or parents direct conflict to constructive ends that ultimately benefit children?

Research Caveats

Suggestions for research should be heeded with full appreciation of the inherent difficulties of conducting scientifically valuable, conclusive studies of large scale education programs. Many of these problems have been discussed elsewhere in the literature. (See, for example, Emrick et al., 1973.) The ones considered most relevant to evaluation of parent participation follow.

Diffusion of "Treatment" to Control Groups

Programs designed to bring about social change as a strategy for improving the education of children are likely to affect both the "experimental" children and the "control" children.

As an example, the Federal funding of a compensatory education program in a Black school on the edge of a middle-sized town may cause a growing sense of community to develop among the parent participants. If the Black parents attain influence and achieve new status in the town and are recognized by the mainstream middle-class school district residents as influential, the entire community of Blacks on the edge of town may identify with participants and begin to feel a sense of potency with regard to the school as an institution. In such a case, measurement of the achievement scores of experimental versus control children from the same community might very well show little or no difference between the two groups.

Since many programs require long time periods to show their full effects, there are often general social changes and improvements, as well as seepages of program effects that raise the performance level of the hypothetically untreated control group.

Conflicting Goals

Specific problems in implementation may arise from the conflict of research and social-democratic goals. For example, parents who are excluded from experimental programs and used as control subjects may feel rejected and cheated. Their friends in the program may become hostile and either withdraw from the program or share their experiences and information with those excluded. Furthermore, the assignment of children to actual experimental groups can often conflict with the school's normal modus operandi and result in non-cooperation from the schools.

Acceptability of Experimentation and Evaluation

In social experiments, perhaps more than elsewhere, the fact of experimentation and evaluation may have as large an impact as any other variable. Experimenting upon citizens and their children, however noble its purpose in the eyes of program developers and the society at large, is likely to become more and more difficult unless there is shared information and responsibility for the experimental venture. If parents are to be included in decision making, it can no longer be assumed that decisions about evaluation or decisions made on the basis of evaluation (such as those affecting continuation or termination of programs) are exempt from input by the parents. Thus, on both democratic and pragmatic grounds parents should have input to or at least understand the criteria according to which they and their programs are being evaluated.

Problems in Measurement

The process of specifying criteria and measuring large scale social intervention programs is fraught with difficulties. Only a few of these are cited here:

- If compensatory education in general makes only subtle differences in the achievement levels of experimental children relative to the control group (even if both make considerable gains), then effects on children from various types of parent participation may be too subtle to discern, however real they may be.
- When is a program "successful"? When has it "worked"? What criteria should be used to evaluate these programs? Who makes these decisions? In the case of Follow Through, for example, socioeconomic impacts could be considered legitimate outcomes when its goals included both broad socioeconomic impacts and educational ones. From the perspective of OE, however, socioeconomic effects are in all likelihood seen as intermediate to the school achievement effects. As long as child outcomes, especially academic performance, are used as the primary measure

(both because of their importance and because of the relatively advanced state of the art of measuring achievement), and as long as the chain of intervening variables is not studied, it will be impossible to discover what factors, including economic changes, are responsible for academic outcomes. How long does it take for the effects of parent participation to be measurable? For how long must effects be sustained to consider the programs as having "made a significant difference"? At present we do not really know whether we measure too soon, with the wrong instruments, or at the wrong place.

Recommended Research

The Office of Education is currently responsible for several major programs and experiments that require parental participation in compensatory education. The time is ripe to find out what is actually going on and to find out the effects of actions by Federal administrators, local education agents, school personnel, and parents on the programs and on the children participating across the nation.

Since studies have not as yet fully documented parent participation or adequately evaluated differential impacts of various programs on disadvantaged children, we do not have experimental findings about effective practices. Nevertheless, many people now have experience in carrying out Federal guidelines promoting such involvement, and it would be absurd to conclude that nothing is known about its conduct and its effects. The recommendation here is not to launch any experimental programs immediately, but rather to study those situations already in existence and to systematize the now widespread but anecdotal knowledge. It is likely that if this knowledge could be used to build appropriate models or hypotheses, the question about effects on children of parental involvement will become several more answerable questions; e.g., "What is the nature of the effect on children in the community of parents voting to approve or disapprove

proposals for Federally funded reading programs?" or "What is the nature of the effect on the child in the community when his mother is employed as an assistant teacher?".

Parent participation should not be an exercise in futility and false hopes. For a low-income individual, participation usually requires some sacrifice. It should be worth the effort. Some of the preceding research suggestions, if implemented, may reveal whether it is and how it can be.

VII BACKGROUND TO POLICY

Part 1 of this paper has discussed in some detail the current state of research regarding the relationship of parental involvement to student achievement. The failure of large numbers of poor and minority children to perform up to national averages is taken by many to be prima facie evidence that substantial change is required in the system of schooling in which these students participate. A variety of ways have been tried in which parents of these children are involved formally with the schools as tutors of their own children, as paid employees, and/or as advisors and decision makers. It is hypothesized that in some or all of the ways described in Part 1 (see particularly Section V), this involvement of parents will lead to increased student achievement.

With a few exceptions on the positive side (e.g., parents as tutors of preschool children) there is practically no evidence either to support or to contradict the hypothesized relationship. Certainly research should continue, and Section VI of Part 1 has suggested a number of important directions. However, even under the best of conditions it will be many years before research on parental involvement will give us much policy guidance. Thus if action were to be based solely on the potency of parental involvement as a program element, Federal policy could confine itself to the considerable research yet to be done in this area, and to the prompt dissemination of results when they are obtained.

However, the state of research evidence is not the only basis for specifying parental involvement in Federal programs. Instead, such a requirement is ordinarily rooted in political choices as they surface in the legislative process. The political debate over parental participation

usually revolves around the supposed capacity of parent councils to engender either comprehensive school reform or what is termed "community development" -- raising the consciousness and improving the personal and political skills of the poor.

While these appear to be two separate issues, they become so entangled during debate that it is difficult to draw any practical distinction. Participants in this argument tend to group themselves into two sides. One espouses an activist "liberal" philosophy of direct Federal intervention, and the need for a "wholly different" kind of education for disadvantaged children. The other side espouses an assistive "conservative" philosophy of Federal support programs which would provide the disadvantaged child with the traditional type of education but with perhaps doubled or tripled resources.

Confusion of and disagreement on these issues exist within the Federal government as well. In recent testimony on funding for the disadvantaged in Educational Revenue Sharing, Acting Commissioner Ottina stated that "what the disadvantaged should get is the same sort of assistance and attention all students should be getting, only more--a good deal more ... compensatory education (is) not intrinsically different" (Education Daily, April 3, 1973). On the other hand, ESEA Title I documents are full of injunctions not to make the program just more of the same thing that has already failed the child, with great stress placed upon understanding the unique needs of the children and developing specialized program to meet these needs.

Neither side is able to take a position which is internally consistent,* and the result has been that regardless of which group holds

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*Supporters of the activist/liberal position are rarely able to face up to the frequent conflict between parents and teachers which occurs when institutional reform is initiated. This dilemma is reflected in

political sway at any particular time, there is considerable vacillation in policy and disagreement over the interpretation of the steps that are taken.

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ambivalence over parental roles. The necessity they feel for reform suggests a checks and balances, or change-agent role; avoiding conflict with professionals suggests placation or sanctions roles which would not encourage involvement of parents.

Supporters of the passivist/conservative stance are no better off. While they have no special loyalty to educational professionals as a group, neither do they believe that the Federal government should intervene in local institutions. Firmly advocating "local" control, they nevertheless do not support "self-determination" when it means that it will occur at the expense of established local government patterns. Their proposals for school assistance are thus a strange mixture of non-involvement, special regulations, and a touching but naive faith in N.I.E. to provide something which will save the day.

VIII A NEW ROLE FOR PARENTS

It seems clear by now that continued political wrangling over the issue of community development is fruitless. To the best of our knowledge, there is no solid documentation to demonstrate that parental involvement in the schools raises community consciousness, or that it is likely to lead to the kind of school reform talked about so lovingly. Moreover, "parental involvement" is so unsettled by its multiple philosophies that it is unable to make any substantive contribution to the problem at hand. It appears that a fresh perspective is needed on whether the involvement of parents can produce specific operational benefits to programs of education for the disadvantaged.

Criteria for Parental Group Activity

In determining whether an appropriate and effective role for parents exists, an initial distinction should be made between forms of individual activity and collective activity by parents.* Individual activity might include such forms as tutoring one's own children, visiting school, having talks with teachers, or working as a classroom aide. In general, individual activity cannot be produced by legislation--either parents will feel comfortable as individuals in the school setting or it will be up to the school to make them so. Further, many of these activities are clearly elements of particular projects, and as such are an extremely local matter and probably an inappropriate area for Federal policy.

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*A discussion of individual and collective types of parent activity may be found in the forthcoming Follow Through Community Studies report, prepared by Steve Oura. A number of interesting relationships are explored, as between type of activity (collective or individual) and type of motivation (volunteer, paid, peer pressure).

This paper is therefore limited to the discussion of ways in which collective activity by parents might be made useful to the overall compensatory education effort. Although the possible field of action is broad, a few criteria may help to describe the forms most appropriate to this task. Collective activity, for instance in parent councils, would need to be substantive, seen as necessary, contextually oriented, subject to review, and independent. These qualities are discussed below.

- Substantive--Researchers of both Follow Through and Title I projects point to the necessity of having specific jobs for councils to do*; giving parents a purely advisory role does not prove constructive. Without specific tasks, parents tend to be cast into a sanctions role and lose all interest in the council and the schools. Moreover, the resulting ambiguity over the relationship of the council's tasks to the power of the principal and the teachers tends to create conflict, disruption, and bad feelings.

- Necessary--From OE's point of view, there is nothing to be gained by a council whose tasks are merely showpieces. And unless they can make some specific contribution, parents themselves will ordinarily not participate (Section V of Part I discusses this point more fully).

- Contextually Oriented--The greatest resistance to parental involvement is evoked when professionals feel that their "trained" judgment over curricular matters is being interfered with by the non-initiated, or when their jobs appear to be threatened by parental participation in personnel decisions--in short, when parents deal directly with classroom operations. (There are important exceptions to this generalization. See, for instance, the later discussion on "Program Structure.") That parents have a right to opinions in these matters is not disputed, but both in theory and in practice parent groups seem to add the most

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*Conversations about ESEA Title I parent councils were held with members of the research team of the Advisory Council Project at the UCLA Graduate School of Education, particularly with Morgan Chu, Mary Milne, and Dr. David O'Shea. Conversations about Follow Through parent councils were held with project personnel at USOE and members of the national evaluation team at SRI, particularly Steven Oura.

when they are engaged in tasks primarily concerned with the immediate context of education. A few such tasks would be in goals setting, needs assessment, and particularly in evaluation and accountability. In this way, professionals are allowed to use their best judgment about the curriculum and personnel to attain certain goals and are given the freedom to implement their choices, but are then subject to the subsequent evaluation of parents regarding whether these goals have been met.

- Subject to Third Party Review--It is not reasonable to expect that if parents are to perform an important, substantive task within the school, there will be no conflict with professionals; nor is it particularly healthy to try to achieve this. Conflict will occur, and the important point is to provide a mechanism through which disagreements can be resolved while the opposing parties maintain a working relationship. Such a mechanism is the weighing of the different opinions by some third party, a better arrangement than having the parties fight out their differences with each other. At least three possibilities suggest themselves: (1) independent reports submitted to a higher level of school system decision making; (2) an adjudication board within the state department of education or under the state board of education; and (3) regulations written so that non-compliance can be remedied by the courts.

- Independent--As is obvious from the preceding items it seems certain that if parent groups are to perform any meaningful tasks, they must be able to operate as an independent force within the school environment rather than being convenient "sidekicks" for some other stakeholder group. Part of the impact of a parent group will be the energy that is created by potentially changing alliances with teachers, students, or administrators over different issues. The ability to form serial and temporary alliances with other stakeholder groups seem to be a characteristic of effective parent groups and one which is lacking in ineffective groups. For instance, researchers of the decentralized Title I parent councils in Los Angeles* point particularly to the usefulness of parent groups in assisting site front leaders to communicate with administrators, or helping school level administrators in negotiations with district level personnel. While such

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*The researchers--Moyan Chu, Mary Milne, and David O'Shea--have not yet published their findings.

flexibility obviously cannot be ensured, some preconditions for independent operation can be established, e.g., official recognition, direct funding, and specific tasks.

Heretofore, the functions of parent groups have been devised as if they were expected to single-handedly reform every imbalance or injustice in the public school system. Now we should ask instead whether there are specific problems in the operations of compensatory programs, or their immediate school context, which active and independent parent groups can alleviate. This is the perspective from which we will examine parent involvement in the remainder of this paper.

An examination of the current conditions of education for the disadvantaged displays at least two such candidate problems: ineffective evaluation and auditing of compensatory programs, and overburdened urban school boards that lack insight.

Accountability and Evaluation

The present system of evaluation and auditing of school programs in general, and of Federal programs in specific, is seriously ineffective at the local level. Both the Federal government and the states have tried to force the schools to be more effective for a given amount of money, and pressure continues toward finding new instruments and accounting procedures which will make accountability a more workable concept. However, these efforts suffer acutely from all the pitfalls of management at a distance, especially when neither the process for doing the task (teaching methods) nor the objectives of the task (learning goals) are well defined and agreed upon. The usual measures of output are the pupils' results on standardized tests, and these are clearly only a partial indicator of the required output of a school. Moreover, the state of empirical research on effective classroom techniques is embryonic at best. Existing accountability instruments, such as PPBS, are very expensive, have yet

to show any tangible pay-off in solving the educational issues that are central to schooling, and are increasingly under political attack from those who have misgivings about their applicability to broad educational objectives.

A narrower aspect of accountability is the evaluation of specific Federal programs for the educationally disadvantaged. Setting aside the recurrent difficulties of evaluating national programs, there are two glaring problems with evaluations that are done locally. First, evaluation at the school district level is done essentially by the same group of educational professionals who designed the programs. This presents the familiar dilemma of the judge who tried his own case: at the district level, projects are "doomed to success." The second problem derives from the fact that, as study after study has pointed out, even when individual projects are patterned on the same model, significant variation occurs among projects (see, for example, Emrick, Sorensen, and Stearns, 1973). Not infrequently, there is more difference among applications of the same model than between models. At best, evaluations at the school district level collect aggregated data, and draw aggregated conclusions which are not responsive to the disparate working designs of individual schools. They usually fail to distinguish successful from unsuccessful projects within the district, or to apply remedies appropriate to real situations. Some more objective and sensitive external evaluation is clearly needed.

Urban School Boards

The second problem pressing on parent involvement is that in dense and extensive urban school districts, the elected citizen school board is increasingly unable to perform its functions adequately.

In theory, at least, it is the layman, not the professional educator, who controls the public schools. Beneath the level of collective activity

represented by the local board of education, there has been individual involvement of parents in less formal parent-teacher associations for many years. Although there is little hard evidence, it seems that these forms of participation have usually worked satisfactorily for middle class families in socially and economically homogeneous neighborhoods. However, in many urban areas, a school district frequently encompasses wide social, economic, ethnic, and cultural diversity. Parents often do not assume that district boards represent values compatible with their own; nor do they view the professional educators in these schools as sympathetic and responsive.

Ultimately it is the responsibility of the board of education in a district to see that the educational needs of real students are met, and yet these boards have only the bluntest of tools with which to work. School boards are classically understaffed, and the time which they can give to the innumerable problems of the district is severely limited. As a result it is difficult if not impossible to gather enough information to keep track of what is actually going on in individual schools, either financially or educationally. Usually the board must settle for making the best general decisions for the district that it can, on the basis of undifferentiated and unrevealing information. Too often this procedure leaves individual school problems untouched.

This predicament is further complicated by the diversity of project design within districts. Such diversity appears to be a given, since it occurs both in programs which distinctly encourage local design (e.g., Title I) and those which support the application of discrete models (e.g., Follow Through).

With the continued Federal presence in programs at the local level, and the increasing reach of teachers' and administrators' unions, it is essential that lay control continue to be exercised at least at the

district and state levels. However, if district school boards are to fulfill their educational responsibilities to real students, they must also develop an information network which is far more sensitive to the conditions of individual schools.

Tasks for Parent Councils

Local parents can begin to cope with these two problems--accountability/evaluation and restraints on local school boards--if they have the interest and opportunity to do so. They are close enough to know and monitor the operation of the individual school or compensatory project, and to provide much needed information to the school board. Their perspective is not altered by a stake in professional advancement or by administrative constraint. Many of the difficulties of accountability are reduced if they are more clearly vested in the parents and exercised at the level of the individual school, supporting increased accountability through the school board. Classroom visits, meetings with teachers, and curriculum discussions are activities that could provide for a type of review which, if exercised in a cooperative mode, might achieve many of the most important goals of accountability. In the long run, a process of formal review by parents would shift the focus from the relatively tangential issue of financial accountability to the far more central issue of goal and process accountability.

In the short run, and in keeping with Federal requirements for parent involvement, the assignment to parent councils of the task of preparing an Annual Report of Progress in their schools could provide a very valuable service. In situations where evaluations are major components in the decision to continue funding, parents would doubtless be under the same pressure as professionals to doom a program to success rather than to risk its discontinuation. However, when funding is more or less assured,

as with ESEA Title I or revenue sharing, objective evaluation or project effects by parents becomes a far more feasible possibility.

This evaluative task is not in conflict with the prerogative and tasks of professionals; yet if well done and forceful in its logic and evidence, it would provide an input to the revision of school operations which would be hard to resist. Such a report could minimally include such topics as school and staff characteristics, fiscal accounting for compensatory funds, pupil performance, and subjective views.* Extremely formal written reports should probably not be expected from parent councils, unless they have appropriate support staff.

If parents are to responsibly carry out such an evaluative task (or similar tasks in goal setting or needs assessment), they will have to be supplied with certain kinds of information on the operation of the school district and the individual school. Basic financial information would include the "need level" or their district and school (e.g., the number of students in that school from families under the poverty level), and the average expenditures per pupil in their school and across the district. Basic educational data would include some written statement by school personnel about what they considered to be priority objectives, plus access to school and grade-level results of whatever output evaluations (usually standardized tests) were made.

While most of this information exists within the school system, it is typically buried in the baskets and desk drawers of literally dozens of offices, and requires the combined skills of an archaeologist and a good private detective to uncover. The up-to-date collection of such

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*A program of this design has recently been established by the Legislature of the State of Florida. Details of this program can be found in Section VI of Improving Education in Florida, report by The Governor's Citizens Committee on Education, Tallahassee, Florida (March 15, 1973).

data, and its public distribution would provide parents--whether as individuals or parent councils--with the beginnings of an objective base from which to evaluate the policies and progress of local schools. Much of this information will need to be collected anyway in order for USOE to effectively administer and audit Federal funds in education, particularly in view of continuing requirements for financial comparability. Fairly simple guidelines could therefore be developed to make such information available to parents at the same time.*

There is some point in enquiring here whether the particular parents concerned--low income, frequently poorly educated themselves--can perform adequately a function which the educational establishment and the Federal government frequently have not. We believe that they can. When parent groups have been given specific tasks to do, rather than only advisory functions, interest and participation have increased. When interest is high, extensive experience and training are not indispensible prerequisites--as selected projects in Follow Through and Title I have demonstrated, to the chagrin of many administrators. Individual parent groups have carried out complicated and perceptive analyses, and produced persuasive and pointed reports on the operation of "their" programs. Examples are the Follow Through parent groups in Racine, Wisconsin and New York PS 243.

It appears that parents could be used to perform independent evaluations at less cost and greater effect than would be likely with some elaborate state or federal machinery. Despite a wealth of confusing data and "expert" opinions, the issues in most evaluations are reasonably

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*All of the materials needed to compile the parents' report could be gathered from sources other than classroom observations. While observations made in the classroom can provide important subjective information, many teachers' unions will not tolerate visits for the purpose of evaluating either personnel or curriculm.

clear, even--or perhaps particularly--to stakeholders other than professional educators. In addition, problems once discovered by parent groups have a built-in constituency for solution, something which neither SEA's nor USOE can provide. It goes without saying that such a process will not always go smoothly. However, it appears overall to be a method of monitoring which has a fair chance of improving on present methods. If properly developed, parent groups could represent the interests of the school board and the Federal program in a much more finely tuned way than any other group is currently doing.

IX TACTICAL ISSUES

The consideration of a number of specific issues concerning the organization and functioning of parent groups may help to focus this perspective and highlight important supporting steps.

Dealing with Conflict

The question must be raised whether such tasks as we have suggested for parent councils will not bring parents into increasingly threatening relationships to teachers and administrators. We think not. While it is not reasonable to expect that a situation will be created that is free from conflict, it is not a foregone conclusion that conflict is harmful. In both the short run and the long run, some conflict can result in the generation of energy and interest in problems that might otherwise go unattended. But when conflict turns to disruption of education--when the schools are closed by boycott or teacher strike or violence--we may conclude that disagreement is no longer constructive.

Federal policy has had an alarming tendency to pretend that if the possibility of conflict is not admitted, it will go away. This policy is particularly indefensible given the political history of parent councils. Parent councils for Title I were established at the direction of the Commissioner, and regulations and guidelines acknowledge only their advisory function. In operation, however, the government was committed to a policy of local self-determination for the councils and those which chose to take a more active role generally received

encouragement from project officers and consultants (Oura, in press; Wofford, 1969). Thus, minority parents in general, and PACs in particular, have become active stakeholders in the educational process. Whether or not parent councils are now required by Federal regulation, the interest and concern of these parents is not going to dissipate quickly or quietly. Parents are going to continue to be interested in how Federal monies are used in the schools, and this concern will not infrequently lead to disagreements.

The tasks proposed here for parents need not result in disruption, however, and may in fact deter it. It is generally agreed that immediate confrontation and disruption occurs most frequently when parents focus their efforts on the hiring or firing of individual teachers, or on revising classroom teaching methods through direct intervention. With some justification, professionals feel that these are matters that should be dealt with through self-regulatory mechanisms. By assigning parents to tasks of evaluation, rather than design, professionals are allowed to exert their best individual judgment within the classroom, which is then subjected to the parents' legitimate question of whether the chosen methods and teachers were effective in reaching stated goals. In this way both parents and professionals can perform functions which, while overlapping, are not indistinguishable. Each has a sphere of legitimate and parallel responsibility.

In addition, we may expect that the school and district will want to make various levels of internal evaluation. In cases when parents and professionals disagree on basic issues, an independent evaluation will provide a mechanism through which each can presumably develop data and analyses to move the argument from the philosophical to the factual level, thereby aiding in its resolution.

Finally, the addition of specific tasks that are not merely placation devices can help to avoid the intense frustration of concerned parents which often leads to open attacks on staff and curriculum.

Administrative Organization

The natural constituency of a parent group is the neighborhood or area served by a single school. The school can effectively and legitimately tap the power of a "grass-roots" organization within which parents can recognize and correct problems in the education of their own children. Unfortunately, this "catchment area" does not correspond with either school district administration or Federal program administration. Policy decisions ranging from goals to program content to personnel are typically made at the district level. In many school districts, especially urban ones, there is little that even the most cooperative principal or teacher can do to adapt to parent requests which differ from district policy.

The best long term solution to this problem is to establish more authority and more power at the level of the individual school within the district. Until the individual principal and the teachers collectively at a given school can exercise more control over curricular and financial matters, there is a limit to how much they can do to be responsive to parents' expressed concerns.

Obviously, if this change is to come about at all, it must come through incremental changes in state and district operational policies. However, there are ways in which Federal policy can encourage or create the pre-conditions for such an adjustment, such as by focusing upon information, needs assessments, and evaluations at the individual school level. Another way is to provide a structure for parent groups that operates at the individual school level. When parent councils have been

established for Federal programs, they have usually been mandated only at the district level, a level at which few parents can be involved directly, and at which the parent groups are often unable to organize support for their policies unless a grass roots organization already exists. In contrast, parent groups started at the school level may then be combined to produce district level groups if appropriate. Care must be taken to fit the tasks of the parent group to the level of school administration with which they will deal.

Encouraging Participation

Even in a community where many parents are not satisfied with the schools, it is often extremely difficult to obtain broad-based participation in parent groups. Certainly the main reason is that the pressures on low-income parents simply to survive leave little time for the endless meetings that characterize almost all modern organizations. Besides time and energy constraints, however, participation is limited because many such parents feel that school personnel perceive them as ignorant. Parents report that their visits to school--or home visits by school personnel--are uncomfortable or embarrassing; they feel they do not belong, and are looked down on. No person eagerly participates in a program which communicates his deficiencies to him. A related problem is that at least some segments of the low-income and minority communities believe that educational institutions are not amenable to change or that they are irrelevant to the needs of their community. If Federal programs require or even simply allow formal parent involvement, they must first encourage participation. As a first step in doing so, Federal policy must provide and spell out roles for parents which are recognized as legitimate by both parents and professionals, and provide opportunities for effecting meaningful change, when that is appropriate.

Unfortunately, encouragement is a necessary but not sufficient step to achieve a high level of participation. The program must expect low levels of participation as the norm, but with the functions that we have suggested be assigned to parent councils, a valuable contribution can be made even with a low percentage level of participation.

Program Structure

The amount of structure which is built into an educational program is one of the crucial elements in determining the amount of positive parent involvement. In general, it appears that the more structured the program, the more decision making can profitably and peacefully be done by parents. This hypothesis can be illustrated by referring again to two major Federal programs: ESEA Title I and Follow Through.

ESEA has been a very unstructured program at the local level. Subject to a few planning and expenditure guidelines, Title I provides money to districts to use in aiding disadvantaged children through almost any of a wide variety of locally developed programs.

Follow Through, on the other hand, is a relatively highly structured program that sets out in detailed fashion exactly the functions on which money should be spent, and provides a tightly monitored list of specific curricular/pedagogical programs (i.e., Follow Through sponsor's models) on which it may be spent. Each of the sponsors has been carefully selected by OE based on the importance of the alternative which it provides and the judgment by OE that the sponsor can mount an adequate training program at the local school level. Thus teachers and administrators in the school have reasonable assurance that regardless of which model the parents select, it will have some minimum level of educational validity. Therefore, even though parents have been given the responsibility for selecting

the sponsor (and therefore the program), the level of conflict has been relatively low.

It is precisely this structuring and agenda setting process which is not available to teachers and parents in the Title I program. Instead, nearly all the structure has to be provided by parents and professionals inside the district. If, under these circumstances, parents were given the power to control program content at the same time that teachers and administrators were attempting to create it, a situation would be created which has the maximum opportunities for serious mistakes and conflict. The likelihood that parents would make decisions with which the professionals would not live would be extremely high.

X RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE FEDERAL ROLE

The Federal role in education is both advisory and directive. The advisory role is found in the research, development, dissemination, and technical assistance functions. The policy implications of this role were touched upon in Part I of this report, especially in terms of needed elements of a research program on the effects of parental involvement. The directive role is rooted in laws passed by Congress and in Executive policy as it is detailed in regulations and guidelines published by HEW and USOE. Such regulations and guidelines set the terms under which Federal money from a particular authorization can legally be spent, and may suggest other desirable though not necessarily mandated actions on the part of the state and local educational agencies.

At present there is a dispute about the appropriateness of Federal regulation between those who hold a categorical philosophy and those who hold a revenue sharing or block grant philosophy on Federal aid to education. We view it as unfortunate that this argument has all too often been seen in the context of regulation versus no regulation. From our perspective, it is very clear that those who advocate revenue sharing will not shrink from circumscribing the actions of local school districts with regulations when they appear to be necessary for fulfilling the intent of the legislation. The Better Schools Act of 1973, for example, flows from the theory that the Federal role is to create a context within which the local management will operate. While the details of the local operation are not specified, restrictions are imposed if compelling reasons justify a particular restraint. Thus this bill regulates the focus upon the disadvantaged by maintaining the recently developed

requirements for comparability. This is a very strong restriction of the context of management operation, but one which HEW clearly feels is merited by the realities of local budgeting pressure. In addition, this bill proposes the establishment of a concentration requirement and a minimum allocation of funds to mathematics and language arts.*

A primary task for USOE is to create a stable setting and, to the extent that they can be determined, establish the preconditions most conducive to successful program operation. Thus, if compelling reasons can be found for a particular restriction on the context of local management--reasons which are not contradicted by research evidence--it is in USOE's interest to support appropriate regulations. It is from this perspective that USOE will need to view the question of parental involvement in programs of education for the disadvantaged. As indicated earlier in this part of the report, we feel that there are some common sense reasons and some common sense ways to involve parents formally in Federal programs for the disadvantaged.

Four general recommendations and ten specific recommendations are presented below. They are oriented toward a general support program such as ESEA or the Better Schools Act, rather than toward more specific demonstration or experimental programs such as bilingual education or Follow Through, since the former type of programs will need to develop guidelines consistent with their own ends.

General Recommendations

(1) Some mixture of specific tasks and advisory functions appears to be the most functional design for parent councils, the specific tasks providing a focus for parental efforts

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*Significantly, while both of these restrictions may be viewed as sensible, the research evidence supporting either action is clouded.

from which they may branch out in an advisory nature as the interaction with the principal permits.

Giving parents an exclusively advisory role is not functional. Without specific tasks, parents tend to be sidetracked and lose interest in the parent councils. Moreover, the resulting ambiguity over the relationship of the principal and other school personnel to the recommendations of the parent group tends to create conflict, disruption, and bad feelings.

(2) The specific tasks given parent councils should not be the ones for which the principal and teacher feel that they have the primary responsibility; rather, tasks should be chosen which parallel the functions of the professionals without displacing them, and which will impact upon the central education functions.

In this way, necessary resources can be given parents to accomplish their tasks without decreasing the professional responsibility of the staff, or creating unnecessary confrontation. (Our specific recommendations for such tasks are listed later as Recommendations 8 through 11.)

(3) USOE must face squarely the nature of the urban education setting and, realizing its potential for serious disruption, develop programs and guidelines which facilitate the interactions of parents, administrators and teachers, and which tend to minimize not all conflict but that conflict which turns into disruption of education.

(4) In line with (3) above, Federal program guidelines should provide specific avenues of recourse for parents when they are unsatisfied with how the regulations are being implemented within a school or a school district.

Two options appear open. The first is to write the regulations in such a way that noncompliance by the schools can be easily enforced through local parent groups obtaining a court order for compliance. The second option is to require that a procedure for adjudication of complaints

be established within either the state department of education or directly under the state board of education.

Specific Recommendations

With the four general recommendations in mind, we would also urge implementation of the following specific examples of the spirit and substance of parental involvement. They are grouped into the three general areas of structure, function, and resources for parent councils.

Structure

(5) It is strongly recommended that parent councils be organized at the level of the individual school, thereby capitalizing most effectively on the focus of the parents from the immediate neighborhood and encouraging the highest participation.

Operating at the individual school level, councils will be of the greatest assistance to the school board in such functions as identifying and monitoring localized needs. Coordinating parent councils at the project-wide or district level may also be necessary, especially in cases in which the local school principal is given little automony. To the extent possible, the Federal guidelines should also encourage decentralization of program control to the individual school level, to make the projects responsive both to the specific needs of the students involved and to the interests of parent councils.

(6) If parent councils are to perform independent and constructive functions, they must be elected rather than appointed.

The question will invariably arise whether parent councils should be made up entirely of parents of compensatory pupils or include parents of all the students in the school. Our suggestion would be to include

non-compensatory parents in the parent councils, but to limit their number to less than a majority of the council.

(7) To provide continuity and an effective working council, individual terms should be at least two, and preferably three years, with staggered elections of equal proportions of the council. We recommend a three year term, with one-third of the membership elected each year, and the chairman to be elected annually for a one-year term.

In the past, guidelines on some compensatory programs, e.g., Follow Through, have limited the term of office of those serving on parent councils, presumably to broaden representation and prevent the formation of in-groups. However, evidence to date appears to indicate that the nature of the parent council as a volunteer organization tends to require unusual leadership qualities for its effective functioning. It appears unwarranted to expect the depth of leadership talent for parent councils that is necessitated by limited terms of offfice.

Function

(8) We recommend that each parent council be assigned the task of preparing an Annual Report of Progress for Federal compensatory education projects in its school, as one prime way to implement the general recommendations (1) and (2) above.

This evaluative task is not in conflict with the prerogatives and tasks of professionals, yet if well done and forceful in its logic and evidence, it will provide an input to the revision of school operations which would be hard to resist. The annual report should include at a minimum the following topic areas: school and staff characteristics, fiscal accounting for compensatory funds, pupil performance, and subjective views.

(9) The Annual Report should mandatorily be included with all requests for renewed or increased Federal program funds, and with proposals for the initiation of any additional compensatory programs within that school.

Immediately upon completion of each annual report, this document should be distributed to all administrators and faculty members within the school, and to all parents of students in compensatory programs. The report should be filed at the school district central offices and at the state department of education. Further, the report should be available to the parents of all students in the school and, upon request, to members of the general public. Summary versions should be submitted to one or more local newspapers, and be posted in several prominent places throughout the school itself.

(10) We recommend that the parent councils advise on and participate in needs assessment and goal setting activities for compensatory programs as a logical outgrowth of preparing the annual reports.

Clearly, these are endeavors in which parents have a reason and a right to participate; however, the parents share these rights with teachers, administrators, and often with the students themselves.

(11) Parent councils should have a strictly limited role in hiring and firing of professionals. However, they should be given an active role in the selection of members of the community to act as teacher aides, where this is integral to the various projects.

Both in terms of the quality of the aides selected and the interest which this generates in the parent council, such a role appears advantageous. Some participation in the selection of the school principal and project director also appears feasible and useful. A similar position on the hiring of teachers may also have potential benefits, but this is the situation with the greatest potential for creating disruption.

Conditions vary greatly, and we do not recommend that nationwide general support programs such as ESEA Title I prescribe a dominant role for parents in teacher selection. This does not preclude the possibility that, as individual relationships between parent councils, principals and teacher organizations mature, there can be constructive interchange on this subject.

Resources

(12) If the annual report is to serve any useful function, it is essential that parent councils have complete and open access to:

(a) Federal and state laws, and Federal and state guidelines and regulations for the compensatory projects, written in a clear and straightforward manner.

(b) All allocation formulas used in the distribution of both general and specific school funds.

(c) Any information necessary to compute allocations, such as school enrollment and pupil characteristics.

(d) Individual school budgeting for compensatory education expenditures, including detailed anticipated and actual expenditures for the previous year and anticipated expenditures for the current year.

(e) A school-by-school breakdown of information regarding student achievement, as measured by any standardized tests administered throughout the district or state, plus information about state and national norms for these tests.

By regulation, most of the information in (a) through (d) above is already supposed to be available to parents. However, in practice it appears that such information is often withheld or very difficult to assemble. Consequently, strong provisions to ensure open access to such information may be needed, e.g., a form to be filed with the state

department of education signed by each of the parent councils attesting that such information is being made available to them.

(13) Some direct funding of parent councils is suggested as a strong support to the performance of an independent evaluative role.

Minimum funding would cover telephone and copying expenses, office space, typewriter and supplies for the production of the annual report. A medium funding level would also provide for some part-time staff to assist in the production of the report, and the coordination of the parent council's activities. A maximal but not unreasonable level of funding would include a part-time salary or stipend to the chairman of the parent council and/or the main coordinator of the annual report. If a target figure for parent council funding of 2 percent of the total compensatory expenditures in that school were used, then the effective level of funding, i.e., minimum, medium or maximum, would be determined by the level of total funding in that school, since the costs of producing an annual report are likely to vary little over a wide variation in the number of students covered.

(14) We recommend development of an information bank on exemplary parent groups throughout the nation.

Information about successful programs could aid new parent groups in facing many of the start-up problems. Descriptions of the processes gone through by other such groups would be helpful, but of even greater help would be the ability to write directly to or visit such groups. Given the limited funds available to parent groups, this process would be aided by an extensive file on exemplary parent groups with wide geographic coverage so that most local groups could find aid from a parent council in its own geographic region.

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